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# Political Thought in France from Sieyès to Sorel

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*Political Thought: The European Tradition*

*Prophet of the Mass Age: A Study of*

*Alexis de Tocqueville*

**POLITICAL THOUGHT  
IN FRANCE**

**from Sieyès to Sorel**

**by**

**J. P. MAYER**

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*To my friends  
R. and L. B. of Paris  
who taught me the intimacies of French life  
with profound gratitude*

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## Preface

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The present book is an essay in interpretation. Its main difficulty was the task of selecting and yet, at the same time, of presenting the wealth and uniqueness of French political thought from Sieyès to Georges Sorel.

An extensive bibliography provides the reader with a guide for further study. It is by no means complete.

Full use has been made of quotations to enable the reader to judge for himself whether my analysis is sound. I rather prefer this 'medieval' method, which I learnt from Thomas Aquinas, in contrast to many contemporary writers who prefer the uncontrollable impressionist monologue.

Moreover, the sources (primary and secondary ones) are not easy to obtain now, and they may be even more difficult to obtain when the war is over. Thus, to some extent, the method of presentation attempts also to substitute for the student of political ideas the library which he may find difficult to possess or to use.

Finally, I wish to thank the publishers of a previous book of mine on Alexis de Tocqueville, Messrs. J. M. Dent & Sons, London, and the Viking Press, New York, for kindly allowing me to draw on material presented in this study. I am also indebted to many friends who either typed from a very difficult handwriting or helped me with invaluable criticisms and suggestions.

J. P. M.

*Stoke Poges, Bucks.*

*October 1942.*

Ce que nous venons de faire, mes  
pauvres enfants, ce n'est jamais  
qu'une analyse.

CHARLES PÉGUY

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# I

## The Legacy of the Revolution

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By the term French Revolution we mean on the following pages not the series of fateful events which have attracted the passion and attention of historians for generation after generation, but rather the dynamic force which, up to this very day, determines French political thought. It would be a fascinating task to write the history of French political ideas from the Constituent Assembly in 1789 to the capitulation of Bordeaux in June 1940 in the light of a profound exposition of a continuing revolution. This task cannot be fulfilled here; yet it is essential to bear in mind that the theme of French political thought during the period under consideration here is, as it were, an orchestral variation of the great ideas which the French Revolution attempted to frame into institutions.

The great principles of the Revolution: *Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity*, foreshadowed and prepared by Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and the American Revolution bear witness to the cosmopolitan, humanistic atmosphere of the eighteenth century. The first four articles of the French Constitution of the 3rd of September 1791 (*Déclaration des Droits de l'homme et du citoyen*) formulate these principles in constitutional terms:

‘Article 1. Men are born and live free and equal in their rights. Social differences cannot be based on anything but the common good.

‘2. The end of all political association is the maintenance of the natural and inalienable rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.

‘3. The principle of sovereignty rests in the Nation alone. No person or individual can exercise authority except insofar as it is an expression of that principle.

‘4. To act without restraint, provided such action does no harm to others, is liberty: thus the exercise of the natural rights of every

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person has no limits except those which ensure the enjoyment of those same rights to all other members of society. These limits can only be determined by law.'

Thus runs the rather abstract formulation of the threefold and fundamental revolutionary conception. It made it clear that Liberty and Equality were rights, not facts embodied in institutions. Moreover the quoted articles do not explain away existing social distinctions, and finally it is important to remember that the idea of Fraternity was defined by 'communal utility' or by the term 'nation'.

It was Abbé Sieyès, the leading theorist of the Constituent Assembly, who in his pamphlet *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers État?* identified the Third Estate with the French nation. Perhaps no pamphlet had a more profound influence on French public opinion during the first stage of the Revolution. It ran into several editions after its publication in January 1789. 'What is a nation?' asked Sieyès. 'A unity of combined individuals who are governed by *one* law and so are represented by the same law-giving assembly.' Aristocracy and clergy with their privileged rights which the *ancien régime* has granted them form an *imperium in imperio*. Consequently, Sieyès concludes the first chapter of his pamphlet: 'The third estate comprises everything which belongs to the nation, and everything which is not the third estate is not allowed to regard itself as belonging to the nation. What is the Third Estate? Everything.' France has become a nation of *bourgeois* and peasants.

And yet political theory is one thing, political reality another. If one examines the varying census qualifications of the revolutionary constitutions drawn up from 1791 to 1799 it is easy to see that the emphatic and impressive statement by Sieyès and by the declaration of 1791 hardly covered the social tension and struggle which went on unabated within the new French nation. Certainly it is true that King, Aristocracy, and the Clergy of the *ancien régime* no longer formed the social bulwark of the French body politic—the guillotine having done its work effectively—but the problem remained to define the Third Estate in accordance with existing or, better perhaps, becoming class structures within the *bourgeoisie*, the term used here in its widest sense. Was the *petite bourgeoisie* under the leadership of Robespierre to be the 'true' representative of the French nation or the new strata of the *nouveaux-riches* who

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had profited from the redistribution of the clergy's wealth or from war profits, so easily made during the revolutionary wars?

This question remained unsettled until Napoleon undertook his *coup d'état* in 1799. His achievements as liquidator of the Revolution have been brilliantly described by H. A. L. Fisher in a volume of the Home University series to which the reader of these pages must be referred.

Napoleon I's contribution to French political thought is immense. The history of political ideas does not express itself, as one might be led to believe from many text-books, only in written words. Napoleon has certainly not written an outstanding treatise on political science, but his deeds have made an everlasting impression on the French political soul. It has recently been shown how deeply Napoleon had been influenced by Rousseau's *Contrat Social*. But he applied the theory of the general will in his own way. Already in 1789, Bonaparte declared: 'A great nation must have a centre of unity. Twenty-five millions of men cannot live in a Republic. This is an unpolitical slogan.' The plebiscitary dictatorship announced itself even as early as that.

Rousseau postulated the complete alienation (*aliénation sans réserve*) of the rights of each member of the community to the state. The totality of the state thus expressed the identity of the individual with the community. There we have defined the substance of the 'Napoleonic principle'. Theoretically, one must admit, it could mean a voluntary submission of the individual to the State; in practice it led to *tyranny*.

Perhaps we may now attempt to characterize some of the essential and permanent features which the first phase of the French Revolution bequeathed to coming generations of Frenchmen. The *bourgeoisie* was firmly established. The artisans suffered badly—a consequence of the wars—from the almost complete extinction of the luxury industries. The position of the peasants, which, as the pre-revolutionary *cahiers* indicated, was previously so pitiable, had certainly improved: 'They were', writes Seignobos, 'freed from feudal rights, from tithes, war taxes, salt taxes, and paid practically no other taxes. Many had acquired land, either from the State, or had bought it from the landowners. The financial crisis had helped them to sell their produce at a good advantage, and to pay their rents and debts with depreciated paper money.' The proletariat was

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just beginning to develop. No wonder, therefore, that Gracchus Babeuf's proletarian revolution was easily defeated.

Henceforward the framework of a *bourgeois* society was established. Liberty meant freedom of opportunity to become rich. It involved an inherent contradiction to the postulate of equality. Every consequent phase of the French revolution arose out of this conflict between liberty and equality. The French nation attempted, as we shall subsequently see, various solutions of this fundamental inconsistency of the revolutionary idea until the very idea of the revolution itself was destroyed and refuted. But it is a long way from Napoleon's fall in 1815 to the collaborators of Vichy in 1942.

Four other features, as established by the Revolution, are likewise of permanent character and provide a constant source of further struggle and challenge. They are (1) the centralization of the French administration; (2) the unified codification of French state-law as embodied in the *Code Napoléon*; (3) a centralized state educational system; and (4) the separation of Church and State. The administrative centralization of the French state with its hierarchical machinery divided the whole country into *départements*, *arrondissements*, *cantons*, and *communes*, all of these ultimately under the rule of the Minister of the Interior. The Revolution here only completed a process which had already begun in the eleventh century. 'This [Napoleonic] centralization,' again writes Charles Seignobos in his *Histoire Sincère de la Nation française* (Paris, 1937), 'as different from the *ancien régime* as from the autonomic régime of the Revolution, has remained until the present day the permanent armour of French public life under the various political governments.' Of the *Code Napoléon* the same author has to say:

'It was later completed by the commercial code, the procedural code, and the code of penal law.'<sup>1</sup>

Thus in the realm of administration and codification of law, French civic society was firmly held together.

The same unifying spirit prevailed in the University of France which attempted to be a kind of roof-organization, 'comprising all branches of public instruction, from the village teacher to the university professor, and itself controlled and guided by a few cardinal and directing principles of political hygiene . . .'<sup>2</sup> National social-

<sup>1</sup> Seignobos, *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> H. A. L. Fisher, *Napoleon*, Home University Library, p. 157.

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ism, one sees, had much to learn from history. Napoleon himself has expressed the principles on which this educational system was to rest: 'There will be no fixed political state if there is no teaching body with fixed principles. As long as children are not taught whether they ought to be republican or monarchist, Catholic or irreligious, the State will not form a nation.' For three generations this University formed the minds of young Frenchmen.

A word must also be said about the relationship of the Catholic Church and the French revolutionary State. The Church, intimately bound up with the *ancien régime*, as the Russian Orthodox Church with Tsarism, had later to suffer the full impact of the revolutionary upheaval. A complete separation of Church and State, having been achieved, was *formally* reversed by Napoleon I through his concordat with Pius VII in 1802. Alphonse Aulard, in a penetrating study, *Le Christianisme et la Révolution française* (Paris, 1925), has come to the following conclusions: ' . . . He [Napoleon] overthrew the altars of the constituted Church, of the decadairian cult, of philanthropy. By suppressing the moral sciences he broke the group of free thinkers at the Institute, and its members were spread among other classes. This secular attitude of the State, which the *Directoire* had instituted so firmly, was altered by Bonaparte to the advantage of the Roman Church. He strengthened this Church by ending the constitutional cleavages. He discredited militant free thought, and rendered it almost harmless. In fact, he re-established the Roman Church to a dominant position, though for political and not pious reasons. He imagined that he himself would rule the Pope, and through the Pope the consciences of the people.'

We certainly agree with the eminent historian in point of fact, but his laicist bias is too obvious. Just because Napoleon I used the Catholic Church for ultimately political motives, the problem of the mutual relationship between the French State and Catholicism was only temporarily shelved, hardly solved.

The repercussions of the Revolution went far beyond the frontiers of France. When the Republican armies stopped the interventionist powers before Valmy it was Goethe who, in profound appreciation of the significance of the French victory, entered this in his diary: 'From here and now a new epoch of World history begins'. And was it not Kant who compared the French Revolution with the European landmark created by the Reformation? Wherever in

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Europe the armies of revolutionary France appeared, the old patriarchal and feudal order was swept away. From Paris the officers of Alexander I carried the message to Russia where it profoundly influenced the rising young Russian intelligentsia.

Yet at the same time as the message of a social revolution, powerful and fateful national counter-movements came into being. The Napoleonic *gloire* had already a distinct nineteenth-century flavour. It was different from the spirit of a *civilisation universelle* which guided France in the seventeenth century and during the period of the enlightenment. The sorcerer had found all too willing apprentices.

Perhaps no more appropriate conclusion to this chapter, which is meant to lead us to a short analysis of the subsequent periods of French political thought, can be found than Edmund Burke's criticism of the French revolutionary spirit as he expounded it in 1790: 'I hear it is sometimes given out in France that what is doing among you is after the example of England. I beg leave to affirm that scarcely anything done with you has originated from the practice or the prevalent opinions of this people, either in the act or in the spirit of the proceeding. Let me add that we are as unwilling to learn these lessons from France as we are sure that we never taught them to that nation. The cabals here, who take a sort of share in your transactions, as yet consist of but a handful of people. . . . As such cabals have not existed in England, so neither has the spirit of them had any influence in establishing the original frame of our constitution, or in any one of the several reparations and improvements it has undergone. The whole has been done under the auspices, and is confirmed by the sanctions, of religion and piety. The whole has emanated from the simplicity of our national character, and from a certain native plainness and directness of understanding, which for a long time characterized those men who have successively obtained authority among us. This disposition still remains. . . . When the people have emptied themselves of all the lust of selfish will, which, without religion, it is utterly impossible they ever should; when they are conscious that they exercise, and exercise perhaps in a higher link of the order of delegation, the power, which to be legitimate must be according to that eternal, immutable law, in which will and reason are the same, they will be more careful how they place power in base and incapable hands. In their

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nomination to office, they will not appoint to the exercise of authority, as to a pitiful job, but as to a holy function; not according to their sordid selfish interest, nor to their wanton caprice, nor to their arbitrary will; but they will confer that power (which any man may well tremble to give or to receive) on those only in whom they may discern that predominant proportion of active virtue and wisdom, taken together and filled to the charge, such as, in the great and inevitable mixed mass of human imperfections and infirmities, is to be found . . . ? Against the background of this grandiose statement of some of the permanent principles of Western political thought the heritage of the French Revolution ought to be considered.

## II

# From the Restoration of the Bourbons to the Fall of the Orléanist Monarchy (1815-48)

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**N**othing perhaps is more important to bear in mind for the student of political ideas than that what we call political thought is only an abbreviation, or even better, a selection of facts. This applies, of course, to all historical research which, while dealing with individual phenomena, attempts to formulate historical structures or even norms which ought to help us to arrive at our own political decisions. The ideal and probably only legitimate form of historical study is ultimately the biography, because only in the individual does the respective historic period objectivize itself. With this warning before us, we proceed in our difficult task towards a selective analysis of French political ideas which only attempts to present to the student an instrument for further study.

When Louis XVIII returned from exile he realized that the France of 1789 could not be brought back. In his declaration of the 2nd of May 1814 we find the revealing passages: 'The sale of State property will be irrevocable' and 'The guaranteed government debt, pensions, distinctions, and military honours will be maintained, as well as the old and the new nobility. The Legion of Honour will be preserved, and We will decide upon the nominations.' Thus the economic framework which the first phase of the revolution built up, was fully maintained, and what is perhaps more significant, the social value patterns of the Napoleonic society were integrated into the Bourbon Monarchy. The proclamation of the *Charte* in June 1814, laid the foundation of the new régime which was interrupted by Napoleon's return from Elba, and the hundred days' episode, which need not occupy us here.

The *Charte* was a typical instrument of a régime which attempted

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a compromise between Revolution and Restoration. It will suffice to quote only one sentence from the new French constitution: 'While We recognized that a free monarchist constitution should fulfil the expectations of an enlightened Europe, We had also to remember that Our first duty towards Our people was, in their own interests, to preserve the rights and prerogatives of the Crown.' Now how did this 'free constitution' work in practice? In 1820 the total population of France was 29 millions. Out of over 10 million taxpayers only 916,525 were voters, of whom only 18,561 were eligible for office. In addition to these provisions the Government very carefully scrutinized the election candidates, and gave open support only to those whom they regarded as suitable and safe. Louis Blanc in his admirable work, *Histoire des Dix Ans*, characterized the social forces which formed the foundation of the government of the *Charte* period in the classic terms which follow: 'The real disunity existing within France was as follows: some wanted an agricultural nation, with a restoration of a large-scale farming, and re-establishment of the big estates by trust and the rights of seniority; that the clergy should be compensated for the State forests; that the centralized administration should be destroyed; and finally that the country should be handed back to the aristocratic régime whose foundations had been broken with the aid of the kings by the *bourgeoisie*. The others had ideas which were diametrically opposed. The former group made up what one should have called the Feudal party, the latter... the *bourgeoisie*.' (I, p. 75.) Nevertheless, from 1815 to 1820 a serious attempt was being made to build up around the *Charte* a centre party which might have given stability to the new royalist régime. Yet the uncompromising attitude of the latter made such an attempt impossible. The moderate liberal elements of France went into opposition, until in 1830 the régime of the Bourbons fell during the Revolution of July.

It may now not be too difficult to give the various schools of French political thought during this period their proper place. We shall discuss (1) Royer-Collard and Guizot as the leading figures of a group of political thinkers who are commonly named *The Doctrinaires*, (2) the position of the Liberals, (3) Catholic political thought, (4) the French Romanticists, (5) finally, Socialist thought.

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### *(1) Royer-Collard and Guizot*

Royer-Collard and Guizot were the most influential political thinkers among the *Doctrinaires*. Both were profoundly inspired by the example of British constitutional development. Royer-Collard was a professor of Philosophy in Paris University; Guizot, for many years, its celebrated teacher of European and French history. The influence his lectures exercised on the young French intelligentsia, which had never experienced the Great Revolution, can hardly be overestimated.

Royer-Collard has been called the theorist of the *Charte*. It is doubtful whether this does him justice, as we shall see presently. As a young and brilliant lawyer he was a member of the Convention in 1793. He then warned the assembly in the following unmistakable terms: 'We recognize in the Convention only the Convention. We will defend it against those, who, under the mask of patriotism would suppress freedom . . . so that the bloody sceptre of anarchism be broken, that the reign of law may begin, and that a constitution based on equality and freedom may make the sovereignty of the people triumph.'

But the young orator could not prevent the Jacobins from achieving power. He fled from Paris and was lucky to escape the guillotine. In 1797 we find him as deputy of the *Conseil* of the Five Hundred for his native *département* of the Marne.

'My principles', thus he addressed his electors, 'are known; they are yours and those of all conscientious men who, under the shadow of the peace and the constitution of the year III, hope and wish for a return of order, justice, and true liberty; the restoration of the moral order reinstated on its *ancient foundations* [our italics], the final and absolute abolition of the revolutionary monster.' It was in the Council of the Five Hundred where he made one of the most characteristic speeches of his whole political career; in it the spirit of his political philosophy revealed itself most clearly: 'We have borrowed the greater part of our principles from American legislation, without perhaps foreseeing the enormous difference in application that they have undergone among us. There a multitude of sects scattered over a vast territory mix together in some fashion in the cities and even in the heart of families. Here, three religions

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scarcely divide a population of twenty-six millions, and in this excessively unequal division, the Catholic religion rallies under its ancient banners seven-eighths of all Frenchmen. It has survived the monarchy whose birth it preceded; it has triumphed against the attacks launched by the tyranny of the revolution, it has been handed on to the present generation by home education and public instruction, the manner of persuasion and habit having made an indelible impression on their hearts. This religion is the one that is the basis of the popular moral order, it is she who gives her sanction to the tasks which bind the citizens together and to the State. . . . You do not wish to destroy this catholicism in France, for you are not stupid tyrants; you should not do it, for the catholic faith, as all others, is under the guarantee of the Constitution. *I hasten to maintain that you could not do so.* [Our italics.] The destruction of catholicism could only be carried out in two ways, either by the annihilation of all religious principles, or by the establishment of a new religion. . . . There is no need to repeat to enlightened legislators that they will not deceive the most imperative need of the people, the need of a belief to visualize the future, to place their hopes and fears beyond the limitations of the physical world and human life. And if religious beliefs are inherent in our nature to such an extent that we could not, even in our thoughts, separate them from human communities, where then is there a religion more worthy of the protection of the law and ready to rise triumphant from her ruins, than the catholic? O, you, who from the depth of your inertia, attempt to substitute for the dogmas of a religion which eighteen centuries have covered with their venerable dust, all kinds of philosophic bagatelles, do you know what religion is? Have you counted, to use Montesquieu's magnificent phrase, the innumerable threads by which it binds you? Of course not, quite a different goal attracts you, you show quite plainly that you are interested in obtaining the support of a political group . . .

We have quoted Royer-Collard at length here, not only to give an idea of his power of speech—he was one of the greatest orators in French history, severe and austere—but also to show how the principles of his political philosophy expressed themselves long before he gave his thought its most mature form. We cannot ascertain whether he was then already influenced by Burke; it seems highly probable that he had read the *Reflections on the French Revolution*,

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steeped in English philosophy as he was, yet it is certain that this conception of the religious foundation of society is truly Burkian, framed in the pointed and profound logic of Pascal, of whom he was an ardent admirer throughout his life.

Religious freedom within the State was for Royer-Collard one of the limiting safeguards against an omnipotent sovereignty which he abhorred and feared, having experienced the terrors of the Jacobins and the plebiscitary dictatorship of Napoleon I. The three other freedoms without which an authoritarian democracy seemed to him unworkable were: freedom of the press, freedom of parliament, and the immovability of the judiciary. Enough has perhaps been said about the first freedom. On the three others just enumerated, Royer-Collard makes the most penetrating comments which no student of political science should fail to examine very carefully. It is no exaggeration to say that though much of Royer-Collard's political thought is coloured by an attempt to 'philosophize' the *Charte*, much more is a lasting contribution towards a systematic exposition of modern political thought.

He conceived his freedoms as limiting powers against the potential threat of an absolute State power in the shape of either an absolute monarchy or an absolute democracy. Against the latter he warned as seriously as against the former. '*La démocratie coule à pleins bords*', he once said. It is essential to build up powerful dikes. Freedom of the press, he maintained, is an essential safeguard for freedom, particularly when parliament and judiciary are paralysed. The freedom of the judiciary—here again the example of the British constitution may have guided him—gives to the State a conscience above, possibly even *against* the State. And finally there is parliament, which he divided into an upper and a lower house, the members of both being *not* representatives of the people, but rather representatives of different *interests* of the nation. It was a functional democracy for which he pleaded, not a democracy based on universal suffrage. With this we have reached the ultimate limitation of Royer-Collard's political thought. He saw that democracy was on the march, but the devices to regularize its inevitable victory needed a younger mind and a less spent energy. Perhaps he realized this himself when he wrote in 1888 to his young pupil, Alexis de Tocqueville, who was to follow up and to perfect the old master's difficult task: 'I have not come into the world to change it; the

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small part I have taken in current affairs has satisfied my desire for activity, or, if you would rather, my ambition. I was not meant to undertake more. You, monsieur, have otherwise been given to mark your way over the earth, and there to blaze your trail.'

It seems much more appropriate to call Francis Guizot (1787-1874) a *doctrinaire* than Royer-Collard. The latter, never ambitious to seek real political power, deep and trenchant in his thought; the former, with a versatile, eclectic mind, ready and almost ideal for a practising politician whose realm is the art of compromise. His books, as has been mentioned already, were widely read. They show a remarkably wide range of learning and are, even to-day, after a hundred or more years of historical research, delightful and profitable to read. His studies on the *English Revolution*, his *History of European Civilization*, or his *History of the Origins of Representative Government*, apart from their significance as the first attempts in the nineteenth century of a European conceived science of history, easily reveal the compromising character of his political philosophy, if one can call it such. Thus we read in the third lecture of his Course of 1828, *Cours d'histoire moderne*: 'A school of feudal publicists, represented by M. de Boulainvilliers, pretends that after the fall of the Roman Empire, the conquering nation, afterwards become the nobility, possessed all powers and rights, which they have lost only through the usurpation of kings and peoples. A school of monarchists, represented by the Abbé Dubos, maintains on the other hand, that all the acquisitions of the nobility have been unjustly wrung from the German kings, who, as the heirs of the Roman emperors, alone ruled legitimately; a democratic school, represented by the Abbé de Mably, argues that nobles and kings have only risen to power on the ruins of popular freedom, and that the government of society primitively belonged to, and still properly belongs to, the people; while above all these monarchical, aristocratic, and popular pretensions, rises the theocratical pretension, the claim of the Church to rule society in virtue of her divine title and mission.' 'All these powers', Guizot proceeds, 'claim to be legitimate, they do not profess to be based on force, they all claim to rest on right, justice, and reason.' From these firmly established presuppositions Guizot goes on to formulate the fundamental aims of his historical and political creed: 'From the mere fact of its enduring, we may conclude with certainty that a society is not com-

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pletely absurd, insensate, or iniquitous—that it is not utterly destitute of *those elements of reason, truth, and justice, which alone can give life to society* [our italics]. If, further, the society develops itself—if its principle grows in strength and is daily accepted by a greater number of men—that convincingly proves that in the lapse of time there has been progressively introduced more reason, justice, and right. It is this introducing right and truth which has given rise to the idea of political legitimacy; it is thus that it has been established in modern civilization.' He rejected, like Royer-Collard, the idea of sovereignty; the only sovereignty he recognized was Reason. As its bearer he insisted on the guiding and leading rôle of the *Tiers État*, or more specifically in his own terms: *la classe moyenne*. He failed to see, not only between the years 1815–30, but even more blatantly during the period of the July Monarchy, that his *classe moyenne* was constituted by the commercial and financial oligarchy—the rising French proletariat or the French peasantry scarcely ever claimed his attention. Perhaps his famous dictum—'*Enrichissez-vous par le travail et vous deviendrez électeurs*'—has been wrongly interpreted as cynical. His kind, tolerant nature would certainly not have allowed him such an outburst. The practical reasons for his opposition to universal suffrage lay deeper. He could only think of a gradual extension of the franchise, being fundamentally an educationalist, as his great and lasting work, the organization of French primary education in 1833, proved. Again he shared with Royer-Collard a profound admiration for the *Charte*, the constitutional wisdom of which he attempted to fulfil. Yet he knew too much of English history to conceal from himself, as Dunning has finely remarked: 'that the English system, a product of unconscious growth and adaptation to concrete demands, was not to be expected of any government that was planned and instituted complete at any given moment of time'.

From the moving and fascinating introduction to his book on *Parliamentary History of France* to which he gave as title, *Trois Générations, 1789–1814–1848*, we should like to quote the concluding lines: 'Political freedom has undergone several eclipses in our time. It has always reappeared and assumed its proper place, as a suppressed right rises again, and an unrecognized need makes itself felt. In 1814 it was abolished; it was thought to be dead, and I saw it reborn and prosper. In 1848 it was seized by a violent fit of

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fever. As it recovered, it languished and began to perish. I do not know what obstacles or delays are yet in store; but I repeat . . . I have confidence in the future of my country and of political freedom in my country, for quite surely 1789 did not herald for France an era of decadence, and it is only through a free government that effective guarantees can be given for the general interests of the community, the personal rights of every man, and the common rights of humanity.' With such a striking note of confidence the politician Guizot leaves the political scene to plunge himself in the more congenial realm of further historical work and memory.

#### *(2) Two Liberals: Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant*

Germaine Necker, Baronne de Staël (1766–1817), the beautiful daughter of Louis XVI's Finance Minister, must be analysed together with Benjamin Constant (1767–1830), though not because they had together produced a daughter, later the Duchesse de Broglie, the charming hostess of the *Doctrinaires*. Constant was educated in Switzerland, Scotland, and Germany, being the son of a protestant French aristocratic family which had sought and found refuge in Switzerland. He was a member of the Tribunat in 1799, but his uncompromising Liberalism forced him into exile where he met Madame de Staël. Though these passionate lovers quarrelled and broke with each other at a later date, it was Germaine who taught Constant the respect for representative institutions which they both studied at their source: in England.

Of all the books the unconventional Baroness has written, perhaps the most important is the one published posthumously: *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution Française depuis son origine jusques et compris le 8 Juillet, 1815*. This study, with which the long series of critical expositions of the first revolutionary phase was opened, is certainly, from a purely literary point of view which need not concern us here, hardly as polished and elegant as her book, *De l'Allemagne*. Yet for the student of French political ideas the *Considérations* are of fundamental importance. Madame de Staël regards the tendency of the Revolution after 1791 as a distortion of the real aim of that profound and epoch-making social transformation. The Jacobin terror, the Directorate, and Napoleonic tyranny, are to her a flagrant violation of individual

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rights which the Revolution attempted to secure. Of Napoleon she writes: 'Out of the whole inheritance of his terrible power, nothing more remains to the human race than the knowledge of a few more secrets of the art of tyranny.' Even in 1816 she sees very clearly that the dangers of Bonapartism have not been finally overcome. While she upheld the principles of the liberal revolution of 1789, she violently opposed the Ultras of 1814: 'Will it always be necessary to rule three hundred years behind the times, or will a new Joshua order the sun to stop in its course! . . . It would be interesting to know to which generation of our forefathers infallibility had been granted. . . .' 'They want an absolute king, an exclusive religion and intolerant priests, a nobility at court based on inheritance, a Third Estate raised from time to time to the nobility, an ignorant people with no rights, an inactive army, ministers without responsibility, no freedom of the press at all, no juries, no civil liberties, but police spies and hired papers to flaunt this work of darkness.' The claims made by Madame de Staël for a truly liberal state are almost self-evident.

Madame de Staël's 'Utopia', as Albert Sorel, in his admirable book on her has said, was England. English life and institutions ultimately shaped her political thought. 'Admirable monument to the greatness of man! . . . No nation in Europe (and the Baroness had widely travelled, lived, and loved in many countries) can be compared with the English since 1688: there are a hundred and twenty years of social perfection between them and the Continent.' She is far from being an uncritical admirer of the English, as a pertinent American political scientist has suggested. Does she not write? 'They have deposed, killed, and renounced more kings, more princes and more governments than the whole of Europe put together. . . . In the immediate history of this people there is more violence, more inequality and, in some respects, a greater spirit of servitude than among Frenchmen. . . . In spite of this they have attained the promised land.' She is full of admiration of the English Constitution—'. . . this constitution, still hesitating while leaving port, like a ship that has been launched and is at last unfurling its sails, giving an impetus to everything great and generous in the human soul.' Liberty alone can tear the iron bondage of tyranny. She foresees the rising grandeur of North America, she prophesies the national future of Russia, and she suggests federations for the

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German and Italian peoples. 'Anything is better than losing the name of nation.' Here perhaps we see the beginnings of the far-reaching and ill-fated alliance of liberal political thought with nationalism. The future belongs to the nations, and the progress of civilization, as Madame de Staél conceives it, must be built on national independencies. Nations are individuals writ large, as it were. The German *Volksgeist* theory seems to have profoundly influenced Madame de Staél's impressionable mind.

The liberalism of Benjamin Constant is much more subtle and theoretically worked out than the political philosophy of his friend. 'By liberty', he writes acidly, 'I understand the triumph of individuality, as much over authority which would rule by despotism as over the masses who claim the right to subject the minority to the majority.' He rejected Rousseau's postulate that each individual has to give up his rights to the State. Democracy, thus he firmly maintained, is not necessarily liberalism, a distinction of which no student of political science should light-heartedly lose sight. 'There is a part of the human being which of necessity remains individual and independent . . . Society becomes a usurper when it transgresses this frontier, and the majority becomes a rebel. . . . When authority commits such acts, it does not matter much from which source it is said they emanate, whether it calls itself an individual or a nation; it would be the entire nation, without the citizens that it oppresses, who would not legitimately be such any longer.' This spirit of an almost anarchical liberalism is certainly unsurpassable. Constant based his radical liberalism on the moral essence of the human being, but, does not this very assumption—that man is fundamentally a moral human being—mean simply that his fundamental structure is social as well? Constant was never able to provide us with a satisfactory answer to this question.

Apart from this basic difficulty of his political philosophy further examination of his thought shows that he was never ready to accept traditional solutions of problems of political theory. He was dissatisfied with Montesquieu's three principles of the separation of political power which he replaced by an enumeration of five: the royal power, the executive power, the power that represents permanence, the power that represents opinion, and finally the judicial power. Executive power he wants to see exercised by the

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ministers, for the power which represents permanence he postulates an hereditary assembly, for an elective assembly he expects the representation of opinion, all five powers harmonized and brought to co-operation by a monarch. It is not difficult to see that here, too, the example of the working machinery of the English constitution provided the guiding principles.

With the English constitutional example before him, two other aspects of his *Politique constitutionnelle* deserve special attention. Constant energetically defended decentralization, clearly seeing that 'municipal power is not a branch of the executive but something entirely independent'. Furthermore he stressed the importance of well-organized political parties as disciplined constitutional instruments to provide a government with an alternative opposition in order to prevent a political revolution. In this respect Constant has probably made his most original contribution to French political thought.

When Louis Philippe became King of France in 1830 he not only paid the considerable debts of Constant, who liked an aristocratic style of living, but he also made him President of the State Council. Constant has reached the summit of his public career. His application for election to the French Academy—he would have liked to become one of the *Quarante Immortels*—was unsuccessful. It was Royer-Collard who rejected him; perhaps the author of *Adolphe* did not seem to stand on firm moral grounds, so Royer-Collard and his friends, amongst them the Duchesse de Broglie, may have thought. During the winter of the same year Benjamin Constant died. It is not for us to judge whether by rejection of his claim to become an *Académicien*, Liberty was insulted.

### **(3) Traditionalist and Liberal Catholics: *De Maistre, De Bonald, Lamennais, Lacordaire, Montalembert***

To give an adequate place to French Catholic political thought from de Maistre to Montalembert, even in a short and necessarily abbreviated study like the present one, is to-day, writing in 1942, perhaps more important than ever. The same fundamental conflict of ideas which divides de Maistre and de Bonald from Lamennais and Charles de Montalembert, to-day separates Charles Maurras from Maritain and his pupils and friends. It is impossible to

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estimate the contribution of men like Lamennais, Lacordaire, Dupanloup, and Montalembert towards the liberation of French Catholic thought from the yoke of traditionalism, without taking into account the strength of the traditionalism which they vainly attempted to overcome.

Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821) was a philosophizing diplomat. A Savoyard aristocrat, he became, as Dunning has wittily remarked, ‘a Frenchman only by virtue of a revolution which he so detested’. For fourteen years he was Sardinian ambassador to Russia. He is probably the most radical Ultramontane political thinker French political thought has produced. In his work, *De l’Église gallicane*, he bluntly refuted the liberties of the Gallican Church. ‘The liberties of the Gallican Church?’ he asked. ‘There are none; all that is concealed under that high-sounding name is a conspiracy of the temporal authority for despoiling the Holy See of its legitimate rights and separating it, in fact, from the Church in France while paying lip-service to its authority.’ Authority is ultimately of divine origin, the government of the Church by the Papacy being its ideal example. There is almost a Hobbesian touch in de Maistre’s political logic. It is devoid of any generosity or trusting love in human beings.

Society grows, it is not made. Man is a social animal whom necessity has driven into society. De Maistre denies justice as the law of the universe. Government, thus he proclaimed, has to be absolute and unlimited. ‘There can be no human society’, we read in his treatise *Du Pape*, published in 1821, ‘without government, no government without sovereignty, no sovereignty without infallibility, and this last privilege is so essential that its existence must be assumed even in temporal sovereignty (where it does not reside in fact) as an essential condition of the maintenance of society.’

Neither reason nor will are the foundation of human action, but emotion, sentiment, and above all prejudice. Consequently we are not surprised if we find in his *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques*, published in 1814, the following statement: ‘The roots of political constitutions exist prior to all written law. A constitutional law is and can be only the development or sanction of a pre-existing and unwritten right. What is most essential, most intrinsically constitutional and truly fundamental, is never written and indeed never could be without exposing the State. The weak-

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ness and frailty of a constitution are in exact proportion to the number of constitutional provisions that are written.' De Maistre professed a great admiration for the English constitution, but he hardly grasped its atmosphere. He can scarcely have read Burke properly even though he admitted, 'how Burke has strengthened my anti-democratic and anti-Gallican ideas'. The latter's philosophy with its firm moral basis can never have been congenial to him.

Louis de Bonald (1753-1840) would not have protested if he could have seen himself placed together with de Maistre in a history of modern French political thought. Did he not write to de Maistre: 'I have never thought anything that you had not previously written, nor written anything that you had not previously thought'? Of course this should not be taken too literally. Frenchmen are very polite. Against the theories of the revolution he upholds the fundamental oneness of a political and religious society. Society, according to de Bonald, is directed by a sovereign power, the agents through which it acts, and finally the subjects under it. Furthermore he expressly defines society thus: 'The union of like beings to the end of their reproduction and conservation.' (In *Œuvres*, ii, p. 138.) Family, Church, and State alike are determined by a universal and perennial law of nature, which in the realm of the State expresses itself thus: a sovereign power to will, a ministry to execute, and subjects to obey and to profit by the combination of all.

He prefers the greater stability of a monarchy in which he regards the nobility as the agent of the sovereign. Only the nobility seems in de Bonald's view to be free from the temptation to use office for the purpose of making money.

For the Declaration of Rights he has the deepest contempt. Equality is incompatible with de Bonald's conception of order which 'among men is nothing but the art of causing some to go ahead of others so that all may reach the goal in time'. Sovereignty, so he teaches us, is in God, as power is from God. Consequently, law is 'the will of God and the rule of man to maintain society'. A striking sentence from his *Législation primitive considérée . . . par les seules lumières de la raison* (*Œuvres*, ii) illustrates his idea of law more fully. 'Bad laws have a beginning, but the good, emanating from God, are eternal as He. At whatever moment men put them down in writing, they come from an earlier time, and like man himself,

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they existed before they were born.' Here indeed de Bonald comes as near to de Maistre as possible.

Félicité de Lamennais (1782–1854) became the founder of French Liberal Catholicism after an Ultramontane phase of his life during which he more or less shared the views of de Maistre and de Bonald. He broke with Charles X in spite of the king's ultra-Catholic legislation, because it seemed to him that even a devout Catholic king is apt to use the Catholic Church for purely political purposes. Lamennais, therefore, stood for disestablishment, which alone might secure the freedom of the Church. In 1828 he published his *Progrès et Révolution* in which he showed that the real strength of the Catholic Church comes from the priesthood as a whole, not from Pope or Episcopacy. There is an almost Ockhamist tendency in Lamennais's thought.

After the July Revolution in 1830 he founded the paper *L'Avenir*, in which he stood together with Lacordaire and Montalembert for a new spiritualization of Catholic belief. Though their efforts to convince French catholics that freedom of the press, freedom of conscience, disestablishment, and indeed universal suffrage were compatible with Catholicism, were finally frustrated, the merit of having created a tradition of a liberal Catholicism will never be forgotten. Those courageous French Catholics—laymen and priests alike—who, after the French capitulation in June 1910 refused to collaborate with their unchristian victors, and indeed fought against them on the side of French workers, have proved that a liberal French Catholicism may even in the twentieth century have a future.

Montalembert helped his friends by his powerful speeches in the House of Peers. 'Catholics', thus he once declared, 'are unequal to their foes because they have not really accepted the great Revolution out of which the new society was born, the modern life of peoples. They are still afraid of it. Many of them still belong to the *ancien régime*, to a system that admitted neither civic equality nor political freedom, nor freedom of conscience. But that *ancien régime* is dead, and will never come to life again at any time or anywhere. *The new society, democracy, will expand in conformity with its principles. Truly the Church can venture, without fear or distrust, on that vast ocean of democracy.* (Our italics.) There was nothing in the old order which Catholicism has any reason to regret, nothing

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in the new it has any reason to dread.' It is perhaps timely that this great witness of a Liberal Catholicism should be saved from oblivion. Montalembert stood by no means alone.

Bishop Dupanloup expressed the same trend of thought when he wrote, 'What is meant by the spirit of the French Revolution?' Are we to understand free institutions, liberty of conscience, political liberty, civil and individual liberty, the liberty of families, freedom of education, liberty of opinion, equality before the law, the equal distribution of public taxes and burthens? All this we not only honestly accept, but all this we call for in the broad daylight of public discussion.

These liberties, so dear to those who charge us with not loving them, we champion, we ask them for ourselves as well as for others. At the present moment what are we doing other than rendering homage to the true spirit of the French Revolution, by claiming its advantages, and demanding the freedom of instruction promised by the Constitution in the name of every lawful religious liberty? We accept, we invoke the principles put forth in 1789. . . . You brought about the Revolution of 1789, without us and against us, yet *for us*, God so willing it, in spite of you.' (We quote this remarkable statement by Dupanloup from Montalembert's *Memoirs of the Abbé Lacordaire*, London, 1863, p. 180 f.)

But before long *L'Avenir* came into difficulties with the Church authorities in Rome. The papacy feared difficulties with the French Government from which in 1838 it had secured the freedom of elementary education. Lamennais, Lacordaire, and Montalembert went to Rome to submit their case in person. The *Avenir*'s stand for political and civic liberty was regarded by the Papacy as an attempt to foster revolt and sedition. So the disillusioned pilgrims decided, when they returned to Paris, to stop the further publication of their paper.

Yet Rome asked Lamennais for more. He was to recant the liberalism for which he had stood hitherto. Lamennais refused and published his *Paroles d'un Croyant* which was sold in thousands of copies within a few weeks. Rome condemned the book, and in June 1834, excommunicated the leader of this first phase of French Liberal Catholicism. A kind of direct and primitive Christianity characterized the *Paroles*. 'In the scales of eternal justice', thus we read, 'your will weighs heavier than the will of kings; for

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it is the people who make the kings; and kings are made for the people, and not the people for the kings. The heavenly Father has not made the limbs of His children in order that they might be broken by chains, nor their soul that it might be bruised by slavery. He has united them in families and all families are sisters; he has united them in nations and all nations are sisters; and whoever separates family from family, or nation from nation, splits that which God has united; he does the work of the Devil.

‘And that which unites family to family, and nation to nation is primarily the law of God, the law of justice and charity, and finally the law of liberty, which is also the law of God. . . .’ One understands easily that this plain and sublime language readily found open ears. Lamennais’s rather vague social philosophy as expressed in the *Paroles*, where he hardly goes further than to postulate justice for the people, is more substantially advanced in his *Livre du Peuple*, which he published in 1837. ‘When you have succeeded in making the foundation of political organization the Christian equality of rights, the resurrection, which you desire, and which God commands you to desire, will be fulfilled of itself in the three inseparable branches: the material, the intellectual, and the moral order.’ The following sentences show how Lamennais’s Christian socialism is now firmly established: ‘Whence comes the evil in the material order? Is it from the ease of some? No, but from the deprivation of the others from the fact that through the laws made by the rich in the exclusive interest of the rich, almost they alone profit from the work of the poor, which becomes less and less fruitful. What is it then all about? We must ensure that he who works shall share equitably in the products of his work. It is a question, not of depriving him who already possesses, but of creating property for him who is now without any.’ Our pious contemporary Marxists might be offended if one were to suggest to them that Marx derived his theory of the ‘surplus value’ from Lamennais!

The revealing passage just quoted seems to indicate also some further principles of the *Communist Manifesto*, which, as we should remind the reader, was written ten years later. Lamennais asks how an equitable distribution of the products of work can be assured? ‘By two means: the abolition of laws of privilege and monopoly; redistribution of capital which is increased by credit facilities, or equal access to the means of production. The effect of these two

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methods would be, in combination with the power created by co-operation, to re-establish little by little the natural path of prosperity, now artificially concentrated in a few hands, and thus to obtain a more equal and just distribution, and to enable it to increase indefinitely.' Harold Laski, who has written an admirable study on Lamennais—the most comprehensive which exists in English—says of him: 'Lamennais never returned to the Catholic church. He lived and died and suffered with those for whom he had chosen the path of exile. His ideas grew more and more liberal until, towards the end, he found himself in close kinship with the apostles of communism. Of the love the common people bore him there is evidence enough; and his pen was ceaselessly employed in the task of their liberation.' He died after having expressly refused the sacraments of the Church which had ordained him almost forty years previously.

After Lamennais had been excommunicated Montalembert and his friends carried on the struggle. They founded a Catholic party 'on the basis of claiming for the Church the common rights of all citizens to write, move about, and teach'. (Quoted from Roger Soltau's brilliant book, *French Political Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1931.) Yet the Papacy gave only a lukewarm support to the Catholic party. In 1846 Pope Gregory XVI, suspicious likewise of liberalism and of the Jesuits, made an agreement with the government of Louis Philippe that the Jesuits should once again be banned from France. Thus the Pope abandoned Montalembert and his friends. French Liberal Catholicism was defeated.

#### *(4) Romanticists: Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Michelet*

A history of French political thought which does not give some indication of the immense influence of men like Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Victor Hugo, and Michelet, could hardly claim to be complete. Not that the men we have chosen as representatives of French *romantisme* are the only ones worthy to be chosen as illustrations of French political romanticism. They are only meant to stand for a trend of thought, or perhaps better, an attitude, without which French political philosophy would lose a certain

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colour. Though Frenchmen like to describe themselves as a logical people, the very absoluteness to which they have sometimes driven their cult of reason, seems to indicate an inherent contradiction. An exaggerated and onesided rationalism is always apt to provoke or to show the reverse: a certain irrationalism. Man, in short, is not only a rational being. We have already seen how de Maistre stressed the categories of emotion, sentiment, and prejudice as driving powers of the historic process. This irrationalism, as we shall see later on, has been revitalized by Charles Maurras and the *Action Française*. Joseph de Maistre was an enemy of the Great Revolution, indeed he was against any revolution. French Romanticism, however, was a progressive movement.

Alphonse de Chateaubriand (1768–1848) may perhaps be called the first great French romanticist, though, in spite of his great influence on his contemporaries, he was too much of an individualist ever to form a school. Furthermore, the relationship between individual and society is not such that the individual creates new social trends *ex nihilo*. When Chateaubriand published his chief work, *Le Génie du Christianisme* in 1802, French society, certainly since 1795, was already profiting from the separation of Church and State. The keys of the cathedral of *Notre Dame* in Paris had been returned to a Catholic society, and in 1796 about 25,000 priests served in 36,000 French parishes. Thus Chateaubriand only helped to reveal a profound reaction within French society against the revolutionary rationalism and irreligion. His intention was, as we read in *Le Génie*, to 'prove that of all religions that have ever existed, the Christian religion is the most poetic, the most human, the most compatible with freedom, art, and literature; that the modern world owes it everything . . . that there is nothing more divine than its teaching, nothing more lovable and dignified than its principles, doctrines, and cult . . . that it favours genius, purifies the senses, develops pious emotions, gives vitality to thought, a noble style to the writer and a perfect form to the artist.' Naturally Chateaubriand has the Catholic religion foremost in mind. Victor Giraud has devoted a formidable study to Chateaubriand's work to which we should like to refer the reader.<sup>1</sup> He doubts, and there is every reason to respect the judgement of such a pertinent historian,

<sup>1</sup> Victor Giraud, *Le Christianisme de Chateaubriand*, Paris, 1925 and 1928.

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whether even Pascal's *Pensées* had a deeper influence on French thought than *Le Génie du Christianisme*.

The history of political ideas expresses itself, as it may be opportune to repeat again, not only in great and subtle minds, otherwise we would not be justified in mentioning Chateaubriand at all. He was of almost unbearable vanity as anyone who reads his *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* may realize. Lanson has drawn our attention to phrases like these: 'My article stirred up France,' 'my pamphlet (dealing with Napoleon I and the Bourbons) profited Louis XVIII more than an army of 100,000 men,' or 'my Spanish war was a gigantic enterprise,' etc. The latter phrase indicates that the restored Bourbon king made Chateaubriand his Foreign Minister. After 1830 he resigned from his peership, hating the Orléans dynasty. His 'liberalism' was, as Lanson remarks drily, 'relative and limited, but real'.

The *Mémoires* made no effort to hide his contempt for Louis Philippe. 'Philippe's superiority is real, but only relative; put him in a period where society still has some life, and his mediocrity will be apparent. . . . Philippe is a police officer; Europe can spit in his face; he wipes himself, offers his thanks and displays his royal certificate. Besides, he is the only prince whom France is capable of supporting at the moment . . .' With disillusioned eloquence Chateaubriand gives expression to the thought that the old European society is dying and that the victory of Republican democracy is inevitable. Yet he warns the oncoming democratic age not to forget these truths which he thought to be truths, aristocratic legitimist as he was: 'The property that is hereditary and inalienable is our personal defence; property is nothing but liberty. Absolute equality, which presupposes complete submission to such equality, will produce the hardest slavery.' Finally he felt that all ameliorations of society should draw on the Christian doctrine. 'You will thus see that I can find no solution for the future except through Christianity, and that Catholic Christianity.'

Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1867) was another of the artist-politicians in whom French civilization is so rich, or, should we perhaps say, sociologically more correctly, *was* so rich. For it seems that during the period between roughly 1820 and 1850 the well-written and well-spoken word by great artists was able to move masses as perhaps never before, and very probably, never after.

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Whereas during the first phase of the Revolution the great orator easily became the leading and crystallizing centre of politics with the exception of the dictatorial periods—dictators like to do their own talking even if they are bad orators—it is arguable that since the 'twenties of the nineteenth century the French political public was easily swept away by men of the type of Lamartine, who was poet *and* orator at the same time. Moreover, it is important to remember that the French press, during the period of the Restoration, was read only by a small *élite*. The annual subscription for a newspaper amounted to 80 francs. Consequently books like those written by Chateaubriand and Lamartine reached a much wider public. (With universal suffrage firmly established, or as more recently, with wireless loudspeakers in public meetings, the atmosphere of political receptivity is bound to undergo profound changes.)

Lamartine's facile optimism to which he gave expression in his *Méditations* and his widely read poem, *Jocelyn*: '*Tout est bien, tout est bon, tout est grand à sa place*' seemed to make him the pre-destined poet-orator to celebrate the great democratic ideas, the fraternity of peoples, and the cosmopolitan humanism which he thought the Revolution of 1848 would finally inaugurate.

His *Histoire des Girondins*, published in 1847, hardly a serious product of patient and detached historical research, was meant to be '*un incendie*'. 'It is said everywhere', he proudly remarked himself, 'that this fans the hard fires of revolution, and that this will give the people experience for the Revolutions to come. May God so desire!' In this work he attempted to defend the principles of the Revolution, while at the same time not to whitewash its terrors. Did he see himself already in the rôle of Danton?

Deputy without party affiliations since 1833, his literary glory and rhetorical fascination gave him a chance to establish the provisional revolutionary government in 1848 in which he became Foreign Minister. He greets the Republic emphatically: 'The new Republic, pure, holy, immortal, popular, and transcendent, expedient and great, has been founded!' Against the socialist workers of Paris who wanted to have a red republic, he declared: 'Citizens, you can commit violence against the government, you can order it to change the flag of the nation and the name of France. If you are misled and sufficiently obstinate in your mistake of imposing a sectionalized republic and a reign of terror, I know that the govern-

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ment is as determined as myself to die rather than to shame ourselves by obeying you. As for me, my hand will never sign this decree! Till my dying day will I repulse this bloody flag, and you ought to repudiate it more than I! For the red flag that you bring us has only been round the Champ de Mars, dragged through the blood of the people in '91 and '93, while the tricolor has been round the whole world with the name, the glory, and the freedom of the fatherland!' Lamartine, it is true, had no lack of courage, but the lessons of the first phase of the revolution he certainly had not learnt.

Another document is perhaps also worth quoting here. As Minister of Foreign Affairs he composed a *Manifesto to the European Powers* which enables us easily to sum up his political philosophy. In it he wrote: 'War is not a principle of the French Republic, though it was a glorious necessity for her future in 1792. Between 1792 and 1848 there is half a century. To come back, after half a century to the principles of 1792 or to the principle of conquest of the Empire, would be to regress and not to advance. The Revolution of yesterday was a step in advance, and not backwards. The world and we want to go forward to brotherhood and peace.' And we read further in Lamartine's *Manifesto*: 'Internally France has decided never to violate freedom. She is equally decided never to violate her democratic principle externally. She will let no-one interfere with the peaceful spreading of freedom and respect of the people. She declares herself the intellectual and friendly ally of all progress, of all legitimate development of the institutions of the Nations who wish to abide by the same principles as she. She will make no subversive or disaffecting propaganda among her neighbours. She knows that there are no enduring liberties except those which arise of their own accord within their own territory. . . .' Lamartine's political optimism can hardly be better illustrated. When the French Chamber debated whether the President of the Republic should be elected either by direct or indirect vote Lamartine pleaded for direct election. He considered only this method worthy of true democrats. It is therefore not surprising that Lamartine retired from politics altogether after Louis Napoléon had made his *coup d'état* in 1851.

Victor Hugo (1802-85) profoundly influenced as artist by

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Chateaubriand and Lamartine, though surpassing them both in mastership of language and imaginative power, sided with the cause of democracy relatively late, in 1850. To him the first phase of the revolution was no longer a living experience. He had grown a man in the seemingly stabilized period between the *Charte* and the second Republic. The July dynasty made him a peer of France. During the Second Republic he made an impressive figure on the right; in the beginning he even supported Prince Louis Napoléon. As his powerful opponent we shall meet him again later as this narrative proceeds. His political speeches which he made in the Legislative Assembly of 1849 show a sincere spirit of social reconciliation and a profound appreciation of social injustice. Thus he said in one of these speeches: 'At the basis of Socialism there are some of the sorrowful realitics of our times and of all times; there is the eternal uneasiness that belongs to human weakness; there is an aspiration to a better lot in life which is not less natural to man, but which often follows the wrong road in looking in this world for what can only be found in the other. There are the living, true, poignant, and combatable miseries. Finally there is, and this is peculiar to our times, this new attitude inspired by our revolutions, which have valued and placed human dignity and the sovereignty of the people so highly, with the result that the man of the people suffers to-day with doubled and contradictory feeling in his misery.' In the same speech Hugo goes on to say: 'It is all this . . . which is in Socialism. All this gives it force, all this estranges from it. . . . While it illuminates that which is false, and satisfies that which is just. . . . Once this act has been accomplished and done conscientiously, loyally, and honestly, socialism might disappear.' He concludes his address by proclaiming: 'You who have made laws against anarchy, now make some laws against misfortune!' Thus the great poet asks his countrymen to achieve a work of social reconciliation to make 'socialism disappear'. He appreciated deeply the unjustness of his contemporary society when held against the ideals of the Revolution, or better, against *the* Revolution, but his abstract emotionalism did not realize that the social reconciliation for which he asked meant in the last resort a structural change of the foundations on which French society was built. Victor Hugo's political philosophy hardly ever went beyond the sphere of an abstract democratism, abstract because he was at no time of his long

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life able to transcend the realm of an emotional appeal to which he gave all the power of his great art.

French romanticism was like English or German romanticism, a counter-movement against the period of enlightenment and classicism. It set intuition, imagination, fantasy, against reason, rational abstraction, and the poetical grammar of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Romanticism implied also a change of personal attitude. The subjectivity of the great French moralists, for example, in the seventeenth century, had, as it were, a distinct experimental touch, whereas the subjectivity of the Romantics bore witness to the final victory of the individual who had become aware of himself as an historic force. Chateaubriand, Lamartine, and Victor Hugo, show, at least as far as their political ideas are concerned, that this new subjectivity is still mixed up with the cosmopolitan attitude of the eighteenth century. An influx of new ideas mainly derived from Vico, Herder, and the German *Volksgeist* theorists gave French romanticism its final shape.

Nowhere perhaps, can we see this process of amalgamation of ideas more deeply at work than in the work of Jules Michelet (1794-1874), the great French historian. His work, *Histoire de France*, in seventeen volumes, to which he devoted thirty-eight years of his life, from 1830 to 1868, was born, as Michelet has remarked himself, '*dans le brillant matin de juillet*'. Indeed the Revolution of 1830 gave him the impetus to describe the history of France '*comme une âme et une personne*'. He conceived history as a resurrection of the integral life of the French people. Climate, food, geography, moral traditions, determine the shape of each French province, indeed of France and her people. His historical method was visionary and as impressive, if not as suggestive as Victor Hugo's *Châtiments*. He was not a *bourgeois*, but vehemently felt himself a man of the people. His work, *Le Peuple*, published in 1846, clearly expresses this feeling. It is a most powerful book which no student of political ideas should omit to read. Michelet appeals to French unity which has to be based on a free proletariat and on a free peasantry, but not alone on them—'for are not shopkeepers, merchants, civil servants, rich people, all of them the slaves of a relentless social system, the tyranny of which has to be broken down as a preliminary condition to that reconciliation of all classes on which the future of the country ultimately depends?' He violently hates England and

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all those like the *Doctrinaires* who, as he thought, ignorantly glorified British institutions. 'The soil of France', he writes, 'belongs to fifteen or twenty million peasants who cultivate it; the soil of England has an aristocracy of thirty-two thousand people who let it be cultivated. The English, because they have not the same roots in the soil, emigrate to where they can find profit. They say *the country*; we say *the fatherland*; among us man and the soil keep together, and do not leave each other; there is between them a legitimate union, throughout life until death. The Frenchman is married to France. France is a land of equality. She has generally, in doubtful cases, deemed land to belong to him who cultivates it. England, on the other hand, has judged in favour of the lord, and thrown out the peasant. She is now cultivated by workers alone.' This explains, thinks Michelet, why the French people have such an incomparable military tradition. The French peasant is fundamentally a soldier. '*Son père fut de la grande armée.*' One should not underestimate the influence of Michelet's militant democratism on the mind of generations of Frenchmen to come.

Perhaps another passage ought to be quoted here: 'If France were to die a natural death, if the time had come, I might resign myself.... But the situation is not such, and that is what makes me indignant; our misfortune is absurd, ridiculous, and only comes from ourselves. Who has a literature which still dominates European thought? We, weakened as we are. Who has an army? We alone.

'England and Russia, two feeble and overateen giants, deceive Europe. Great empires and weak peoples! If France were one for a moment; she is as strong as the world....' '... Here [in France] everyone seeks his friends elsewhere, politics in London, philosophy in Berlin; the communist says: our friends the Chartists. Only the peasant has kept the tradition; a Prussian is a Prussian to him, an Englishman an Englishman. His common sense is right as against yours, you humanitarians! Prussia, your friend, and England, your friend, drank to the health of Waterloo the other day.... Try just to hear yourselves. The eternal peace that some of you promise (while smoke rises from the arsenals!... look at this black smoke over Kronstadt and Portsmouth) let us first try to establish it among ourselves. We are no doubt divided, but Europe thinks we are more so than is really the case.... One people! One fatherland!

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One France! . . . Let us never become two nations, I beg of you. Without unity we shall perish.'

Michelet was for ten years, from 1827 to 1837, professor of history at the *École Normale* in Paris; from 1838 he taught at the *Institut* and the *Collège de France*. His *Précis de l'histoire moderne*, which he published together with his translation of Vico's *Scienza Nuova* in 1827, qualified the young historian, even at that early date, to such a high office. The *Précis* reveals the same political attitude as his book *Le Peuple*. When he analyses Marlborough's victory over the armies of Louis XIV, he significantly adds: 'England ruined herself that she might ruin France.' Or, in his great work on the history of France which has already been mentioned above, he sums up the service the English had rendered to France during the period of *Jeanne d'Arc*: 'First of all, that which makes France, the unity of the Kingdom, they had broken. This happy unity had been the safeguard against feudal violence, the King's Peace; a peace as yet stormy, but the English replaced it by a terrible minor war. Thanks to them, this country found itself backward, just as in barbaric times; it was as if in addition to killing millions of men, they had killed two or three centuries, and nullified the period in which we built this monarchy.' For generations Michelet taught history. His *Précis* is still used in French schools. If one compares the weight of his influence with the anglophil political thinkers whom we have characterized above, it seems almost certain that Jules Michelet's philosophy prevailed.

#### *(5) Socialists*

The régime of the *Charte* as established in 1814 had to recognize one fundamental achievement of the first phase of the Revolution: *equality* before the law, while it upheld at the same time, social inequality. Yet the formal freedom which the *Charte* guaranteed was sufficient to enable the *bourgeoisie* to strengthen its economic power against the influence of the aristocratic big estate-owners, who, more or less alone, held the political power during the years 1814-30.

The French aristocracy had to abdicate because it did not understand that in French history a new period had begun. It is true that the French aristocracy was no longer unified: besides the sons of

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the nobility of the *ancien régime* we find the nobility of Napoleon I and the monied-aristocracy of the period of the Restoration. This aristocracy did not understand the art of conservative reform in which the English nobility was so great a master. Its ranks were closed. Its attitude reactionary.

The Revolution of July 1830 won for the *bourgeoisie* what the aristocracy was bound to lose. The new Orléans dynasty found a new ally in the *bourgeois*, who, in the National guard had created its own instrument of defence. '*La garde nationale fut la bourgeoisie armée*', as a very pertinent historian has aptly remarked. But it was only the upper stratum of the French *bourgeoisie* which profited from the Revolution of July. The numbers of the electorate clearly illustrate this:

<i>Year</i>	<i>French population</i>	<i>Electorate</i>
1830	More than 30,000,000	90,878
1831	More than 30,000,000	166,000
1847	More than 34,000,000	241,000

Only with the help of the workers could the *bourgeois* victory of July 1830 have been won. The ideas of 1789 experience a distinct revitalization. Listen to Victor Hugo, who sings in his *Chants du Crémuscle* (*Dicté après Juillet, 1830*):

*Oh! l'avenir est magnifique!  
Jeunes Français, jeunes amis,  
Un siècle pur et pacifique  
S'ouvre à vos pas mieux affermis.  
Chaque jour aura sa conquête.  
Depuis la base jusqu'au faîte,  
Nous verrons avec majesté,  
Comme une mer sur ses rivages,  
Monter d'étages en étages  
L'irrésistible liberté!*

*Vos pères, hauts de cent coudées,  
Ont été forts et généreux.  
Les nations intimidées  
Se faisaient adopter par eux.*

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*Ils ont fait une telle guerre  
Que tous les peuples de la terre  
De la France prenaient le nom,  
Quittaient leur passé qui s'écroule,  
Et venaient s'abriter en foule  
A l'ombre de Napoléon!*

*Vous n'avez pas l'âme embrasée  
D'une moins haute ambition!  
Faites libre toute pensée  
Et reine toute nation;  
Montrez la liberté dans l'ombre  
A ceux qui sont dans la nuit sombre!  
Allez! éclairez le chemin  
Guidez notre marche unanime,  
Et faites, vers le but sublime,  
Doubler le pas au genre humain!*

At the same time Saint-Simon's and his followers' doctrines began to be taken seriously; hardly by the proletariat—under the Restoration only 10,000,000 out of 25,000,000 people in France were able to read at all—but by some progressive *bourgeois*, who saw in Saint-Simon's social philosophy a weapon with which they were able to counter the political theories of de Bonald and de Maistre.

Enfentin (1796–1864), together with Bazard, one of the founders of the *École Saint-Simonienne* after the master's death in 1825, wrote in August 1830, the following note which shows a keen insight into the social dynamic of this period of French social and political history: 'We know what our power over the people is *to-day*—it doesn't exist; we are not trying to enhance it, but we would like the *bourgeois* to learn that he would enhance it himself so much more certainly if means other than the bayonet and cannon were used to prevent it. Charles X thought that a few soldiers would silence inopportune voices, and the *bourgeois* are almost as blind as he; recent events have helped us to show them up, and we have partly succeeded; one begins to realize that this is the crux of the whole political problem, that it is no longer a question of priests and noblemen as in '89, or even as in 1829, but one of the people and the *bourgeois*, or better of workers and non-workers; one has

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gone a long way when the question is known, also how it should be put. . . . Surely a political philosophy which is able to hit the nail so neatly on the head is worth while considering.

Henri de Saint-Simon (1760–1825) was an offspring of one of the oldest French aristocratic families. Gifted with a generous, brilliantly able, and impressive personality, he spent his vast fortune in his palace in Paris where he collected around him the cream of the French intelligentsia. When his money was spent he made a new fortune during the Great Revolution, but soon he was poor again, and without the help of some friends he would have died from starvation. Widely travelled, his works show a unique awareness of the full totality of life, though he never cared to sit down to work out patiently his great intuitions. This task he left to his secretaries, amongst whom we find the historian Augustin Thierry and Auguste Comte. Though the latter quarrelled later with his great teacher, the *Cours de philosophie positive* is unthinkable without the foundations laid by Saint-Simon.

His attempt to apply physical science, as worked out by his contemporaries, Laplace or Cuvier, to social and political history, was abandoned by him after 1814. He contented himself with advancing the theory of progress of his predecessor, Condorcet, who had taught that 'the progress of society is subject to the same general laws observable in the individual development of human faculties, being the result of that very development considered at once in a great number of individuals'. Saint-Simon's theory of history, while deeply indebted to Condorcet, is in so far less open to abstract constructions because he maintains that there exists a law of an ever-recurring alternation of organic and critical stages in the historic process. Thus pre-Socratic Greece was an organic period of history, post-Socratic Greece a critical one. The history of Rome passed from the organic stage to the critical period during Lucretius and Cicero. Medieval feudalism was from the sixth century onwards an organic period from the time the Christian Church was finally established. With the Reformation and the philosophies of the sixteenth century another critical age began in European history which Saint-Simon sees coming to its end with his own teachings: the age of *industrialism* begins. This combination of Condorcet's abstract belief in human perfectibility—so typical of the eighteenth-century philosophy of history—with Vico's theory of

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the cycle, provides Saint-Simon's social and political philosophy, particularly in the shape Bazard and Enfentin have given it in their *Doctrine de Saint-Simon: Exposition, Première Année, 1829*<sup>1</sup> with a profound concreteness.

We can now perhaps turn to Saint-Simon's social and political philosophy which he expounds in 1824 as follows: 'Now, the most direct means of bettering the moral and physical lot of the majority of the population, would be to classify as essential expenditure by the State those which are necessary in order to obtain work for all able-bodied men, in order to ensure their physical existence; those which have as an object to disseminate among the proletariat as quickly as possible newly acquired positive knowledge; and lastly those which can guarantee to individuals of this class the pleasures and joys necessary to develop their intelligence.

'One should add to this that steps should be taken to ensure that the public money is administered by the most capable men, and those who are most interested in administering it well, that is, by the most important industrialists.' He blames the men who have determined and guided the Revolution of 1789 with having made one enormous political mistake: 'they all tried to perfect governmental action, whereas they should have subordinated this, and made administrative action the supreme action . . . they should have asked themselves, in the present state of customs and elucidation, who were the most capable men to direct the national interests? They ought to have understood that the learned men, the artists, and the heads of industrial undertakings are those who have the greatest ability, and the widest capacities, whose usefulness is the most positive, with the present trend of thought. They should have seen that the work of the learned men, the artists and the heads of industry is that which, in accord with inventions and their practical application, would contribute most to the national wealth.' A certain Platonist trend in Saint-Simon's political philosophy is obvious, the intellectual and industrial *élite* is apt to rule best.

Before we turn our attention to the last work from the pen of Saint-Simon, a word must be said about his treatise *De la Réorganisation de la Société Européenne ou de la nécessité et des moyens de rassembler les peuples de l'Europe en un seul corps politique en con-*

<sup>1</sup> See the admirable edition, introduced and annotated by C. Bouglé and Élie Halévy, Paris, 1924.

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*servant à chacun son indépendance nationale*,<sup>1</sup> which he wrote together with Augustin Thierry while the Congress of Vienna was in session. It is a prophetic pamphlet which gives an idea of Saint-Simon's synthetic-historical mind. Luther, thus Saint-Simon argues, has destroyed the passive bond with which Catholicism had held Europe together. 'Luther has broken these bonds by exciting the national religions.' The treaty of Westphalia attempted to establish a new European order based on the balance of power. But this 'new' order meant new wars. Again Europe must be reorganized: 'Common institutions must be created, there must be an organization. Without these force must decide everything.' That even a European organization of States must be backed by force, Saint-Simon, writing before 1919 and 1939, failed to see. He is hardly to blame.

He clearly realized that the traditional English-European policy of maintaining the balance of power does not imply a true interest in European affairs. Only if England and France create a political bond between them can Europe be stabilized. 'If France and Britain continue to be rivals, their rivalry will create great evils for Europe; if they united their interests, as they are united in political principles, by the similarity between their governments, they would be peaceful and happy, and Europe could hope for peace too.' Only then can a European patriotism (*patriotisme européen*) come into being.

Saint-Simon's last book was his *Nouveau Christianisme*. In it he attacks both Christian religions as heresies: 'I accuse the Pope and his Church; I accuse the Lutherans, . . .' he writes powerfully. He asks his contemporaries to adopt a truly Christian attitude: 'Religion should direct society towards the great goal of improvement of the lot of the poorest class as rapidly as possible.' Or, more emphatically, Saint-Simon concludes his rich life with the following postulate: 'Princes! Listen to the voice of God, who speaks through my mouth; come back, good christians, stop thinking about hired armies, noblemen, the heretical clergy and the judges as crooked as their principal upholders; but in the name of Christianity, see that the tasks which He imposes on those in power are accomplished; remember that He commands them to use all their power to in-

<sup>1</sup> See the fine re-edition by Alfred Pereire in the series *Bibliothèque Romantique*, under the Direction of Henri Girard, Paris.

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crease the social welfare of the poor as swiftly as possible.' Bazard and Enfentin founded, as has already been indicated above, the Saint-Simonian school. They implemented and classified the teachings of their master until they separated from each other, holding different views about the attitude towards women, which brought Enfentin into prison and finally dissolved the *Eglise Saint-Simonienne*.

It was the great merit of Saint-Simon and his school to have shown that the new age of industrialism can be understood only by a thorough analysis of its economic foundations. Bazard, as Bouglé and Élie Halévy have proved, went far deeper into economic details than the great master himself, but the new *collective* trends of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were hardly grasped by the Saint-Simonians.

Perhaps Constantin Pecqueur (1801-87) is the most interesting and important social philosopher during the period between Saint-Simon and Karl Marx; on the latter, as we shall see presently, he undoubtedly had the most decisive influence. For a while he was a member of the Saint-Simonian circle—or should we say, family?—he was, together with Vidal, a member of the *Commission du Luxembourg*, which during the revolution of 1848 was set up under the chairmanship of Louis Blanc. He drafted the resolutions of the commission. Until 1852 he was assistant librarian of the National Assembly. After the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoléon he retired into private life. Pecqueur has written numerous books on which the following necessarily short summary is based. *L'Économie sociale des intérêts, de l'industrie et du commerce et de la civilisation en général, sous l'influence de la vapeur*, 1839. This work was crowned by the Académie des Sciences morales in Paris. He then published: *Des améliorations matérielles dans leurs rapports avec la liberté*, 1839; *Théorie nouvelle d'Économie sociale et politique*, 1842; *De la paix, de son principe et de sa réalisation*, 1842; *Des armées, dans leurs rapports avec l'industrie, la morale et la liberté*, 1842; and finally *De la république de Dieu*, 1844.

The profound religious conviction which expresses itself in Pecqueur's writings testifies to Saint-Simonian influence. 'Everything is sustained in the universe; individuality is only apparent; everything lives through God, the centre of life and everything living . . . every being has some relation with other beings and with God . . .

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the relationships are of two kinds: some are material and necessary: others are moral and according to understanding. The first are accomplished fatalistically and found an assured material harmony; the others are accomplished freely and on merit, and through them a moral harmony is possible. *The universal law that regulates these relationships is religion* [our italics]. . . . Religion is the synonym for union. Irreligion is the synonym for isolation, disunion, anarchy.' This religion which Pecqueur documents by quotations from Pierre Leroux, Lamennais, Kant, Pascal, and Rousseau, manifests itself to man by reason. Reason is the voice of God. To reason you must add love as the principle which makes you act. It is the Pascalian idea of *l'ordre de l'esprit* and of *l'ordre du cœur* with which we are faced here.

Pecqueur accuses the traditional religions of being stagnant and intolerant. His 'religion' claims to be progressive and tolerant. The structures, or, as he says, the tendencies of the life of the individual provide us with the basis of social organization. The needs of the human body require the organization of social consumption; the needs of physical activity the organization of industry and production: *les tendances amoureuses* require organization of marriage and family; intellectual and artistic activity require organization of science and art; religious sentiment requires organization of religion, and finally moral sentiment asks for organization of education.

The general law of social organization must be a *living* one. The social contract undergoes constant change in the life of a people. Pecqueur accepts Fraternity, Equality, and Liberty as principles of social order, but he places Fraternity and Equality first, because Liberty is apt to favour egoism.

Having thus laid down some of the principles on which Pecqueur builds his political philosophy, we propose to show how he applies them to the sphere of social and economic organizations. An industrial society is best organized 'where everything is combined, attached, reunited, men and things, work and capital; it must be produced on a large scale, transported on a large scale, consumed on a large scale'. It is evident here that Pecqueur already fully appreciates the structures of modern industrial society. He also clearly anticipates Marx's theory of the socialization of the means of production when he asks: 'How can one think of appropriating the science and art in which we live? We use this science, we rejoice in

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this art, but we have no exclusive right to it. The field of work, agricultural or industrial, should remain undivided as the field of intellectual and artistic work. *The instruments of work and production should be owned by all.*' (Our italics.) Yet Pecqueur is able to show that such a *common* ownership of the means of production is compatible with *personal* freedom. Individual work becomes an *instrument d'échange* to procure for the individual, and even to facilitate, what is necessary for his own development. Consequently Pecqueur claims that property is not communized, but *socialized* or collectivized. His economic theory 'only destroys property in the hands of some in order to ensure it for all'.

Furthermore his theory of value proves that Marx had read his books with great profit. The value of two products is the same if they have taken the same amount of working hours. 'One hour of my work is worth an hour of yours. . . . It little matters what is the object of the work. The physical and intellectual faculties should not merit a superior social reward, any more than they deserve a higher religious reward. It is not my fault if I am less strong or intelligent than someone else. To admit this distinction in ability is to go back to the right of the strongest. To give to someone because of his ability, is to deprive someone else from the reward for his work. Inequality in ability should not entail inequality in riches, but only a variation in functions. . . .' The intimate affinity between Pecqueur's moral or religious philosophy with his economic theory is striking, and has hardly been surpassed by the later history of socialist thought.

It is a matter of course that Pecqueur conceives the State as highly centralized. It is the State which is ultimately the *propriétaire, entrepreneur* and *capitaliste* alike, administered by functionaries whom he classifies as 'priests, moralists, professors, administrators, civilians, and the military, magistrates, learned men, artists, farmers, manufacturers, merchants, housekeepers, and cooks'. All these functionaries are under the direction of a council in every *commune, arrondissement, and département*. Together they seem to form a kind of corporative State.

Pecqueur appeals for the unity of all classes which he hopes to achieve by moral reform and education, together with economic amelioration. He did not teach the inevitable revolutionary class struggle like Marx.

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So far we have discussed only the evolutionary types of socialist political thought during the period between 1815 to 1848. But the picture would be incomplete if we did not refer to the revolutionary movements of the same period which are mainly connected with the names of Babeuf and Blanqui. Both movements, *Babouvisme* and *Blanquisme*, were supported by the many secret societies which came into being in France, particularly in Paris, from 1831 until the February Revolution in 1848. The workers called in by the Paris *bourgeoisie* to help in overthrowing Charles X expected the new government to do something for them. Gratitude, however, is a word which does not exist in the vocabulary of politics. So the workers had to help themselves. In November 1831 a revolt broke out in Lyons, as a result of which the silk workers of Lyons made themselves for several days masters of the city. Of course the revolt, not directed by any kind of revolutionary strategy, but by hunger, was bloodily crushed by armed force. It was Blanqui (1805-81) who drew from the example of Lyons the lesson of the inevitable class struggle between *bourgeoisie* and workers: 'How difficult it is for the proletariat to open their eyes against their oppressors! If at Lyons they rose as one man it was because the flagrant antagonism of interests would no longer allow the illusion to blind even the most obstinate. Thus the treasures of scorn and ferocity which were stored in the hearts of these merchants were revealed! In the middle of the threats of slaughter they came from all quarters, for the extermination: cannons, carriages, horses, soldiers. To go back to their duties, or to die under fire was the alternative placed before the rebels. The duty of the worker of Lyons, the mechanized man, is to cry with hunger, demanding day and night the pleasures of the rich, cloth of gold, silk, and tears. But such a relentless tyranny has its dangers: resentment and revolt. To avoid the danger, they try to reconcile Cain with Abel. Capital being a necessity as the means of work, one virtuously concludes that there is a community of interests, and consequently a solidarity between capitalist and worker. . . . Each day shows up this affected association between the parasite and its victim more clearly; the facts are eloquent by themselves; they prove that the duel exists, *the duel to death between dividends and wages.*' (Our italics.) Blanqui goes much further than the followers of Babeuf, whose leader was Philippe Buonarroti (1761-1837), Babeuf's fellow conspirator in 1797. It is true that

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Buonarroti taught that social reform could be achieved only by a political revolution, i.e. by conquest of political power. Yet he nevertheless stressed that moral reform ought to precede freedom. 'Before conferring', he writes in his *Conspiration pour l'Égalité*, 'the exercise of sovereignty on the people, the love of virtue must be taught . . . refusing this initial reform would be to hand over power to the friends of all abuses.' Against the moral presupposition of the Babouvists Blanqui works out a clear revolutionary strategy which Marx and Lenin have brought to perfection. The revolutionary dictatorship which has to be set up in Paris, thus taught Blanqui, must be guided by the following principles: (1) Rupture with the *bourgeois* liberals and arming of the proletariat. (2) All elections have to be adjourned and any National Assembly has to be rejected. (3) Church and religions must be fought. (4) The *bourgeois* press must be suppressed. (5) Education for all. (6) Severe measures within the realm of the judiciary and fiscal administration of the French State, in combination with prudent measures in the economic sphere.

Yet this programme was not put into operation in 1848, though it certainly had a profound effect in making French workers conscious of their class situation. It was above all Louis Blanc (1811-82), who in 1840, with the publication of his book *L'Organisation du Travail*, gave the most striking expression to working-class thought in France, before the Second Republic came into being. To him we must now turn.

Louis Blanc, very poor in his youth, first made his way as a journalist. His *Histoire des Dix Ans* has already been mentioned earlier in this book. This work introduced him to the French public as a distinguished and original historian. *L'Organisation du Travail* was published in the same year, namely 1840. This work approached the social problems of his time with great common sense, its lucid reasoning made it at once popular and widely discussed and criticized. Hardly any other book in the socio-political field written in this period had such an immense influence.

Perhaps his socio-economic theory gains more in depth if one first surveys his philosophy of history in which it has its firm roots. Three great principles divide the historic process: authority, individualism, and fraternity. While the principle of authority dominated the past, individualism the modern period of history, Louis

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Blanc is certain that the future belongs to the principle of fraternity. Applied to the first phase of the French Revolution—he had published in 1847 the first volume of a *History of the Revolution* which still belongs to the best studies on the subject—Louis Blanc passionately admires the Jacobins whom he regards as *fraternitaires*. He introduced his ideas about the organization of work with the following sentences which remind us of Sicyès' cutting style: 'Who then is really interested in the maintenance of the social order which has been made for us? Not one single person; the rich no more than the poor, the master no more than the slave, the tyrant no more than the victim! Let us prove: (1) that competition is a system of extermination for the people; (2) that competition is a never-ending cause of impoverishment and ruin for the bourgeoisie. (Our italics.) When this has been demonstrated, it will clearly follow that there exists a solidarity between all interests, and that social reform is for all members of that society, without exception a means of salvation.' (Our italics.) The social reform Louis Blanc envisages requires a strongly centralized State. He defines it as a collective realized being (*l'être collectif réalisé*): 'It is a reunion of wealthy people, chosen by their equals in order to guide the steps of all along the path of liberty.' Yet it is evident that he regarded a strong state only as a passing phase in social history. Thus he writes in his *Organisation du Travail*: 'One day there will no longer be a lower and an upper class, and on that day there will no longer be any need for protective authority; until that day socialism will not be made fruitful, except by the sway of politics.' One sees that Karl Marx has also read Louis Blanc with great attention.

The means by which Louis Blanc hopes to realize his socialist authoritarian state as the first phase of the disappearance of *autorité tutélaire* altogether, is the organization of national workshops. He describes his new social scheme as follows: 'The government would be regarded as the supreme regulator of production, and would be given great power in order to accomplish its task. This task would be to make use of the very spirit of competition, in order to do away with competition itself.' In addition Louis Blanc suggests: 'The government would raise a loan the interest on which would be used to create communal plants in the most important sections of the national industry . . . the government would be regarded as the sole founder of these communal plants. . . . For the

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first year after the establishment of these communal plants the government would control the allocation of functions. After the first year, this would no longer be so; the workers would have had time to get to know each other, and everyone being equally interested in the success of the undertaking, *the allocation of functions would automatically emerge from the principle of election.* (Our italics.) Every year an estimate of net profit would be made, and it would be divided into three parts: one would be divided equally among the members of the undertaking; the other would be used to (1) keep old people, the sick and invalids; (2) alleviate the crises which weigh down other industries: finally the third part would be used to supply the instruments of production to those who wished to join the undertaking, so that it might expand indefinitely.' How Louis Blanc applied his theory to agriculture we need perhaps not detail here. He showed more realism than Charles Fourier, though the influence of the creator of the *phalanstères* is obvious.

It was not our intention to give on the preceding pages a complete history of French socialist political thought during the years from 1815 to 1848. Such an undertaking would very probably require a book of its own. Our purpose was only to indicate some essential trends of socialist thought without which the Revolution of 1848 would appear to be incomprehensible.

### III

## From the Second Republic to the Fall of the Second Empire

The history of political ideas presupposes political, social, and economic history or perhaps better what we are used to term 'political science' is only a conventional cross-section of a complicated process which undergoes a constant making and remaking. Political thought is at its best when it *leads* its contemporaries, at its worst when it interprets history after the event.

The following two documents show political thought at its best. Enfentin writes to a friend on the 31st of January 1848: 'The air is too electrified with political storms, the ground is too crowded with works that revolutionize industry and commerce, so that before a political and financial liquidation takes place, prudence will not be the rule of conduct of the rich, and destitution will be the growing lot of the poor. . . . It will not be a repetition of the liquidation of 1814, nor of 1830, but it will be analogous to that of 1814 in the sense that accounts were closed to the credit of the nobility and clergy, of 1830 to the credit of the *bourgeoisie*, and Charles X will liquidate to the advantage of the biggest and poorest class, to the advantage of the *workers*. . . . Louis Philippe, as well as Parliament, is now where Napoleon and his armies were in 1812 or 1813, where Charles X, his marquis, and his almoners were in 1828 or 1829, where Louis XVI and his court were in '89. Only I hold the belief that the liquidation will be peaceful, without the guillotine, without strangers, without glorious days. . . .' The Great Revolution continues. Enfentin exposes its dynamic law.

The other document to which we should like to refer is taken from a speech which Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-59) made to the French Chamber on the 29th of January 1848: 'A time is coming when the country will once again find itself divided into two great parties. The French Revolution, which abolished all privileges and destroyed all exclusive rights, has yet left one which subsists

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throughout the country—the right of property. But property-owners need cherish no illusions as to the strength of their position, nor need they fancy that the right of property is an unassailable bulwark because it has never yet been breached—for our times are unlike any others. As long as the right of property was the origin and groundwork of many other rights it was easily defended—or rather it was not attacked: it was then the citadel of society, while all the other rights were its outworks. . . . But to-day, when the right of property is regarded as the last undestroyed remnant of the aristocratic world, when it alone is left standing, *the sole privilege in an equalized society* [our italics] . . . it is a very different matter. . . . Consider what is happening in the hearts of the working classes. . . . It is true that they are less inflamed by political passions, properly speaking; but do you not see that their passions, from being *political* have become *social*? [Our italics.] Do you not see that, little by little, ideas and opinions are spreading amongst them which aim not merely at removing such and such laws, such a ministry or such a government, *but at breaking up the very foundations of society itself?*<sup>1</sup> (Our italics.) Yet both Enfentin and de Tocqueville were reaching to deaf ears.

It is true that the immediate cause of the revolutionary outbreak in February 1848 has to be seen in Guizot's stubborn refusal of an extension of the franchise; the ultimate cause, however, lay in a structural change of French society. The French working class claimed its rights. A deep economic crisis resulting from bad harvests in 1846 and 1847 precipitated the revolution. In 1846 France had to import corn for 125 million francs, in 1847 for 231 millions. In Lille in May 1847, 29,000 people out of a population of 76,000 received poor relief. The whole northern *département* was stirred by unrest. The crisis became more intense. Railways had to be stopped which resulted in further unemployment. In Paris<sup>a</sup> a third of the population was receiving relief money and 450,000 had to be provided with bread coupons.

The government of Louis Philippe was unable to master the situation. Revolution was unavoidable. It was led and made by the workers of Paris. A provisional government was formed in which

<sup>1</sup> I have taken this quotation from my book, *Prophet of the Mass Age: A Study of Alexis de Tocqueville*, London and New York, 1939, to which for a further account of de Tocqueville's life and work the reader must refer.

## *the Fall of the Second Empire*

Lamartine, Ledru-Rollin, Garnier-Pagès, and also two representatives of the working class: Louis Blanc and Albert took a leading part. Under the pressure of the working masses the provisional Government declared on February 25th: 'The provisional government pledges itself to guarantee the existence of the worker through work. It pledges itself to guarantee work for all citizens.' An economic reconstruction of France was envisaged. Louis Blanc's *Organisation du Travail* became the slogan of the hour.

On February 27th he demands the setting up of a ministry of progress under his direction. The majority of the provisional Government rejects Louis Blanc's suggestion and proposes alternatively a commission to study the working-class problems with Louis Blanc as President. Blanc accepted this clever compromise which left to the government all important political decisions. The Commission assembles on March 1st in the Luxembourg palace in Paris from which it has received its name.

The details of the deliberations of the *Commission du Luxembourg* need not concern us here. Between April 27th and May 6th the *Moniteur* published some of the results of its findings drafted by Pecqueur and Vidal which followed closely Louis Blanc's *Organisation du Travail*. The Government became frightened; this all the more because in the meantime in Lyons, Marseille, Lille, Le Creusot, similar commissions had come into being. On May 10th the Provisional Government was replaced by an Executive Committee of five members amongst whom there was no place for Louis Blanc and Albert. The Paris workers protested, but in vain. One day after this protest the *Commission du Luxembourg* was dissolved, but not without the setting up of a new parliamentary *Comité du Travail*. The *bourgeoisie* had won the game. General Cavaignac was appointed as Minister of War.

Now the Government created its own national workshops, but these were entirely different from what Louis Blanc had planned. Whereas Louis Blanc had proposed to associate workers in professional co-operatives, the *ateliers nationaux* which were established now, had only the name in common with Blanc's national workshops. They were relief works to prevent, or perhaps better, to hide unemployment. In reality the Government intended only to dupe the proletarian masses and 'to demonstrate the gap in the unrealistic theories of Louis Blanc . . . that he should lose his influence

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and prestige for ever, and cease to be a danger'. (The latter sentence is taken from a contemporary witness, Emile Thomas, whose important book *Histoire des Ateliers Nationaux*, Paris, 1848, has been re-edited by J. A. R. Marriott, Oxford, 1913.) After the June rising of the Paris proletariat, Louis Blanc went as an exile to England, returning only after more than twenty years.

The national workshops were dissolved on the 3rd of July 1848.

If we ask ourselves why the Revolution of 1848 resulted in a defeat for the French working class, it is perhaps again illuminating to refer to Alexis de Tocqueville who in his *Souvenirs* has asked himself the same question and answered it as follows. The socialist leaders 'did not understand either how to use, or how to do without universal suffrage'. Incidentally we should add in this context that the Provisional Government decreed on March 5th that elections for a Constitutional Assembly, based on direct and universal suffrage, should take place on April 9th, but the elections were postponed until April 23rd. De Tocqueville then goes on to say: 'If they had held the elections directly after February 24, while the upper classes were still stunned by the blow they had received, they might have got a parliament after their own hearts; if they had boldly seized the dictatorship they might have held it in their hands for some time. But they put themselves into the nation's hands, and at the same time did everything most calculated to estrange it; they menaced it at the same time that they surrendered to it; they frightened it by the boldness of their projects and the violence of their language while inviting resistance by the weakness of their acts; they gave themselves the airs of preceptors and at the same time made themselves dependants.' De Tocqueville's observations are only too true. They seem to apply likewise to the German Socialists who three generations later made the same mistakes when they founded the Weimar Republic.

So far we have only considered how the French proletariat fared during the Second Republic. Universal suffrage<sup>1</sup> strengthened not

<sup>1</sup> 'Universal Suffrage' was restricted to *manhood* suffrage. Until the fall of the Third Republic this restriction had never been removed. For a detailed discussion of French suffrage see *European Governments and Politics* by F. A. Ogg, New York, 1939, pp. 490 ff. For convenience' sake we shall subsequently speak of 'Universal suffrage', meaning hereby 'universal manhood suffrage'.

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only the *bourgeoisie*, but particularly the French peasantry, still, as we have learnt from Michelet above, the numerically strongest social group in France. Moreover, the Catholics did not feel encouraged with men like Blanqui and Proudhon in parliament. So the Bonapartist movement represented by Louis Napoléon, the great emperor's little nephew, as he has been called, showed its hand. By-elections of the 17th of September 1848 had as result that Louis Bonaparte was elected in five *départements*. Three months later he easily won a majority to become President of the Republic. How within two years Louis Napoléon destroyed the régime to which he had sworn allegiance, is too well known to be retold here. Moreover, the historian of political ideas must necessarily be less concerned with historical facts than with their deeper significance.

It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that no event in the history of France during the nineteenth century had a greater influence on contemporaries and future generations alike than Louis Napoléon's coming to power, though it seems that it is left to the historian to put this event in its real perspective. (Plan of Switching).

### *(1) Louis Napoléon's plebiscitary 'democracy'*

Béranger, Victor Hugo, and last but not least the historian Adolphe Thiers in his *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*, a continuation of his history of the French Revolution, had created the Napoleonic myth which Louis Napoléon cleverly used. A pertinent German observer like Heinrich Heine wrote as early as 1840: 'A restored Bonaparte would persist in gratitude—the poor fool's constant need of support would keep him submissive to his creators. Furthermore, it is easier in France to found a Bonapartist régime than a republic: neither the *bourgeoisie* nor the army would resist the former as strenuously as they would the latter. The *bourgeoisie* depends on one thing only—property. And as for the army—in the cry *Vive l'Empereur!* there are so many sparkling epaulets, so many ducal uniforms, so many forced levies—in short, rapine's shining bait is vanity.'<sup>1</sup> The great poet clearly perceived the signs of the future.

Before Louis Napoléon set out from England in 1840 to undertake his abortive *coup d'état* as a consequence of which he became a prisoner in the fortress of Ham, he had published in London his

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my study on A. de Tocqueville cited above.

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book, *Les idées Napoléoniennes*, which again, though hardly a treatise of political science, must occupy us here, because in it he puts down the political philosophy which guided him later on. It reminds us of another book written in 1924—Hitler's *Mein Kampf*—which unfortunately even when its author made himself *Führer* of the German *Reich* hardly any student of politics took seriously. Perhaps the same may be said of Louis Napoléon's *Ideas of Napoleonism*.

‘There are’, writes the emperor's nephew, ‘in every country two classes of interests, altogether distinct from each other, and frequently, antagonistic; general interests and special interests; the former do not change with generations; their spirit is transmitted from age to age by tradition rather than by system. These interests can only be represented by an aristocracy, or in default of an aristocracy, by an hereditary family. Transient and special interests . . . are continually changing with circumstances, and can only be thoroughly appreciated by the delegates of the people, who, continually renewed, are the faithful expression of the wants and wishes of the masses.’ The application of these ideas is simple, France being a Republic without an aristocracy: ‘To obviate this want of fixity and continuity, the greatest defect of democratic republics, it became necessary to create an hereditary family, to be the conservator of these general interests, but the power of which should be wholly based on the democratic spirit of the nation.’ This is a somewhat clumsy but unmistakably clear definition of the ‘Napoleonic principle’ which after 1851 Constantin Frantz<sup>1</sup>—the young German political theorist whom Bismarck, then Prussian ambassador at the *Bundestag* in Frankfort, had sent to Paris—declared to be the new state's principle of the nineteenth century.

With regard to internal policy the *Ideas of Napoleonism* were hardly less explicit: ‘Liberty, it may be said, was not secured by the imperial laws! Its name was not, it is true, at the head of every law, nor posted at every cross road; and each law of the empire prepared for its peaceable reign.

‘When in a country there are parties fiercely embittered against and violently hating each other, *these parties must disappear* [our italics], this hatred be dissipated, before liberty is possible.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my re-edition of Constantin Frantz's important study, *Louis Napoléon*, Potsdam, 1933.

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‘When, in a country so democratized as was France, the principle of equality is not generally applied, it must be introduced into all its laws before liberty can be possible. When there is no longer public spirit, or religion, or political faith, it is necessary to re-create at least one of these three elements, before liberty is possible. . . .’ The concluding sentences of Louis Napoléon’s *Mein Kampf* run as follows: ‘The Napoleonic principle is not a principle of war, but a social, industrial, commercial, and humanitarian principle. If to some people it appears to be enveloped in the thunder of combat, it is because it was in fact too long surrounded by the smoke of the cannon and the dust of battles. But to-day the clouds have been dispersed, and through the glory of arms a greater and more durable civil glory is seen.’ Surely, this smells more of political propaganda than of political science. Certainly, but Napoléon’s tracts distributed all over France had a formative influence on French politics.

Walter Bagehot who lived at this time in Paris as a journalist, has recorded his impressions and thoughts. His *Letters on the French Coup d’État of 1851* (see Bagehot’s *Literary Studies*, vol. III) give an objective account of the French situation. In his first letter the unprejudiced British observer deals with the dictatorship. Bagehot, thinks a military dictatorship necessary and appropriate in France as the only means of preserving society and the state from collapse. Palmerston’s too hurried recognition of the new French régime was based on a similar opinion. ‘You will, I imagine, concede to me,’ writes Bagehot to the editor of *The Inquirer* (the paper for which he records his Parisian notes), ‘that the first duty of a government is to insure the security of that industry which is the condition of social life and civilized cultivation.’ Indeed trade, thus the English critic establishes to his satisfaction, immediately benefited from the *coup d’État*. Moreover, Bagehot felt that the political justification of the destruction of the Second Republic implied also the moral justification. Will a man who has sworn a solemn oath never to rescue a drowning person look on unmoved from the bank of a river while a man drowns, or will he rescue him? For Bagehot there is only one answer. Bagehot was not a good pupil of Edmund Burke when he asked himself this sophisticated question. A statesman who violates the ‘social contract’ which has given him his mandate is bound to his doom—sooner or later.

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Louis Napoléon came to power by virtue of the universal suffrage which up to this period European democrats generally held to be the democratic instrument *par excellence*. They had not studied the history and the working system of the American Constitution; moreover, the political philosophy of Royer-Collard and Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (on this work, see below) had no mass appeal. Political myth proved to be stronger than political science. In vain had the great Spanish Catholic traditionalist Donoso Cortes, who lived then as ambassador of his country in Paris, written: 'Behind the sophists appears the hangman.' Quantity—the new democratic mass—had turned into a new quality: the modern dictator. It was a shock for the great Swiss cultural historian Jacob Burckhardt, who a few years after the *coup d'état* took another prophetic glance into the future when he wrote of the later Roman Empire: 'Every form and degree which the rule of force can attain, from the most terrible to the most beneficent, can here be seen, following upon each other in an astounding series of alternations.' We to-day—after 1851—are living through another such period, and perhaps we, too, shall see raised to the throne 'some fine big man with a moustache and with the qualities of a corporal'.<sup>1</sup> Bismarck throughout his political career deeply sympathized with the methods of Louis Napoléon's plebiscitary dictatorship. But he had to leave it to an Austrian corporal to fulfil his dream.

Perhaps the greatest document against Louis Napoléon is a letter which Alexis de Tocqueville addressed on the 11th of December 1851 to the editor of *The Times*. There he writes: 'No doubt history will have weighty charges against the Legislative Assembly which has just been illegally and violently dissolved. The parties of which that assembly was composed failed to come to an understanding, and this gave to the whole body an uncertain and sometimes contradictory policy, and finally discredited the assembly and rendered it incapable of defending either liberty or its own existence. History will record this much; but history will reject with contempt the accusation which Louis Napoléon has preferred against us. . . . We may pass over here the account de Tocqueville gives of the events which led up to the *coup d'état*. He concludes with a terrible indictment of the new régime. 'The liberty of the press is destroyed

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my essay, 'Jacob Burckhardt or Flight from Politics', *Dublin Review*, 1941.

### *the Fall of the Second Empire*

to an extent unheard of even in the time of the Empire. . . . As for the appeal to the people, to which Louis Napoléon affects to submit his claims, never was a more odious mockery offered to a nation. . . . The people is called upon to express its opinion, but the first measure taken is to establish military terrorism throughout the country. . . . Such . . . is the condition in which we stand. Force overturning law, trampling on the liberty of the press and of the person, deriding the popular will, in whose name the Government pretends to act—France torn from the alliance of free nations to be yoked to the despotic monarchies of the continent—such is the result of his *coup d'état*. If the judgement of the people of England can approve these military saturnalia, and if the facts I have related, and to the accurate truth of which I pledge myself, do not rouse its censure, I shall mourn for you and myself, and for the sacred cause of liberty throughout the world; for the public opinion of England is the grand jury of mankind in the cause of freedom, and if its verdict were to acquit the oppressor the oppressed would have no other recourse but to God. . . . His English friends never forgot this profound appeal to the eternal laws of the Western world. When de Tocqueville visited London in 1857 to complete his studies for the continuation of his work on the French Revolution, the then First Lord of the Admiralty set an English destroyer at his disposal for the return to Cherbourg. This exceptional honour for a former Foreign Minister of the Second Republic was, as the English people knew, in reality accorded to the courageous champion of European political ideals.

### *(2) Towards a synthesis of French political thought*

Alexis de Tocqueville's political philosophy came to its perfection under the impact of Louis Napoléon's plebiscitary dictatorship. Born as the son of one of the oldest French aristocratic families—his father just by chance escaped the guillotine in 1793, his mother was the granddaughter of Louis XVI's noble defender before the revolutionary tribunal—de Tocqueville studied law and left France disgusted by the régime of Louis Philippe, but nevertheless accepting a Government mission to study the penal system of the United States. He returned to France after a prolonged stay in America and wrote then the first two volumes of his *Democracy in America*,

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published in 1835, which from one day to another brought him world fame. Royer-Collard regarded the work as the most important French study on politics published since Montesquieu's *De l'Esprit des Lois*. It took him another five years to complete the final volume of his work.

In the meantime de Tocqueville had entered parliament where he sided with the constitutional opposition. In his *Souvenirs* which were not published until 1893, and even then were incomplete, he has given to posterity an intimate account of his practical political work. The following passage taken from his memoirs puts his political thought in its proper historic perspective: 'Our history from 1789 to 1830, viewed at a distance and as a whole, affords the spectacle of an embittered struggle between the *ancien régime* with its traditions, its memories, its hopes, and its personnel, represented by the aristocracy, and the new France under the leadership of the middle class. The year 1830 closed this first period of our revolutions—or rather of our revolution, for there is but *one* revolution, *the same under all the changes of fortune, of which our fathers saw the beginning, and of which we ourselves in all probability shall not see the end*. (De Tocqueville writes this prophetic sentence after 1851: it is the main thesis of our own attempt in this book to present the history of French political ideas from the Great Revolution to the end of the Third Republic.) In 1830 the triumph of the middle class was definitive, and so complete that all political powers, franchises, prerogatives, the Government in its entirety, came to be confined and as it were accumulated within the narrow limits of this one class to the exclusion of all below it, and indeed of all above it. . . . The spirit peculiar to the middle class became the general spirit of the Government, dominating foreign as well as home affairs—a bustling, industrious spirit, often dishonest, orderly for the most part, sometimes courageous through vanity and egotism, temperamentally timid, moderate in all things except in the desire for easy living and mediocrity—a spirit which mingled with that of the people or of the aristocracy can work wonders, but which in isolation can only produce a government without virtue or greatness.' Clearly, de Tocqueville has here the living example of English political life before his eyes of which he was always an ardent admirer. His work, *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, was less meant to be a text-book on American political institutions, though as such it is

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still used in American universities, but rather an indirect lesson for his own country. A few sentences chosen from the introduction of his work ought to illustrate this: 'If we examine what has happened in France at intervals of fifty years, beginning with the eleventh century, we shall invariably perceive that a twofold revolution has taken place in the state of society. The noble has gone down on the social ladder, and the *roturier* (from *ruptum, rumpere*, the non-nobleman) has gone up; the one descends as the other rises. Every half-century brings them nearer to each other, and they will very shortly meet. Nor is this phenomenon at all peculiar to France. Whithersoever we turn our eyes, we shall discover the same continual revolution throughout the whole of Christendom. . . . The gradual development of the equality of conditions is, therefore, a providential fact, and it possesses all the characteristics of a divine decree: it is universal, it is durable, it constantly eludes all human interference, and all events as well as all men contribute to its progress.' De Tocqueville asks himself where does this inevitable social process lead us to? 'None can say which way we are going, for all terms of comparison are wanting: the equality of conditions is more complete in the Christian countries of the present day, than it has been at any time, or in any part of the world; so that the extent of what already exists prevents us from foreseeing what may be yet to come.' De Tocqueville is a cautious thinker. He has learnt from Burke's typically British experimentalism which he attempts to combine with his great power of abstraction in which the study of the great masters of political science like Plato, Aristotle, Bodin, Montesquieu, had trained him. While he proceeds with his book, the answer which he seeks seems to become clearer and clearer.

The fourth part of the last volume of *Democracy in America* in all probability contains the essence of de Tocqueville's political philosophy. He maintains that the power of the State favours the equality of citizens because this secures and extends its domination. 'I am of opinion', he writes, 'that in the democratic ages which are opening before us, individual independence and local liberties will ever be the product of artificial contrivance; that centralization will be the natural form of government.' This thesis may easily be proved from history. The English Puritans who emigrated in the seventeenth century to found a democratic commonwealth on the shores of the New World carried with them the liberties to which they

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were accustomed. They had learnt to take part in public affairs in their mother country, they took for granted independent administration of justice, their religious beliefs, and their ideas about liberty of speech and of the press. They defended these free institutions against the encroachments of the State. The example of Napoleon I, on the other hand, shows that he was forced, after the nobility and the upper middle classes had almost been destroyed, to centre in his own hands all the administrative functions of the State. In this case, in contrast to the example of America, the guarantees of individual freedom were completely annihilated. De Tocqueville brilliantly formulates the basic orders of American, English, and French social life when he writes: 'The lot of the Americans is singular; they have derived from the aristocracy of England the notion of private rights and the taste for local freedom: and they have been able to retain both the one and the other because they have had no aristocracy to combat.'

The tendency to centralization of government is irresistible. It is common to all the political states of Europe. The privileges of the nobility, the liberties of cities, and the powers of provincial bodies are either destroyed or on the verge of destruction. Uniformity prevails in the modern world. De Tocqueville is aware that even religions, both Protestant and Catholic, are in danger from the new powers of the State. States often make the clergy their servants, 'and by this alliance with religion they reach the inner depth of the soul of man'. It is only a consequence of State centralization generally that the power of the State bureaucracy increases also. 'In proportion as the duties of the central power are augmented, the number of public officials (*fonctionnaires*) by whom that power is represented must increase also. They form a nation in each nation; and as they share the stability of the Government, they more and more fill up the place of an aristocracy.'

This, however, is by no means a complete picture of the new Leviathan. With its increasing centralization the State becomes also more inquisitorial and more detailed (*plus inquisitive et plus détaillée*): 'It everywhere interferes in private concerns more than it ever did; it regulates more undertakings, and undertakings of a lesser kind; and it gains a firmer footing every day, about, above, and around all private persons, to assist, to advise, and to coerce them.' The economic activity of the modern State is also on the

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increase, the Government becoming not only the country's chief industrialist, but tending to invade the domain of all private industrial enterprises, and to bring them forcibly under its control.

It is manifestly a peculiar dynamic law which is moving modern society. De Tocqueville defines it as follows: 'As long as the democratic revolution was glowing with heat the men who were bent upon the destruction of old aristocratic powers hostile to that revolution displayed a strong spirit of independence; but as the victory of the principle of equality became more complete, they gradually surrendered themselves to the propensities natural to that condition of equality, and they strengthened and centralized their governments. *They had sought to be free in order to make themselves equal, but in proportion as equality was more established by the aid of freedom, freedom itself was thereby rendered more difficult of attainment.*' (Our italics.) Again and again, and in varying terms, de Tocqueville repeats his conviction that the species of despotism by which the democratic nations are menaced is a *new phenomenon* for which there is no historical analogy. 'The thing itself is new; and since I cannot name it, I must attempt to define it.' He clearly envisaged a multitude of men, all equal and alike, working in order to procure for themselves petty and paltry pleasures. Above the race of mankind rises a monstrous tutelary power which 'provides for their security, foresees and supplies their necessities, regulates the transfer of property, and subdivides their inheritance—what remains but to spare them all the care of thinking and all the trouble of living? Thus each nation is reduced to the condition of a flock of timid and industrial animals, of which the Government is the shepherd.'

Against this threat of totalitarianism—as we would say to-day—de Tocqueville offers a possible counterpoise: secondary administrative bodies (both municipal and provincial) with elected officials, independent courts of law, freedom of the press, parliamentary inviolability. In reference to the freedom of the press de Tocqueville makes, however, one reservation of particular significance revealing the ultimate limitation of his political philosophy. 'I think', he writes, 'that men living in aristocracies may . . . do without the liberty of the press: but such is not the case with those who live in democratic countries. To protect their personal independence I trust not to great political assemblies, to parliamentary privileges,

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or to the assertion of popular sovereignty. All these things may, to a certain extent, be reconciled with personal servitude—but that servitude cannot be complete if the press is free: the press is the chief democratic instrument of freedom.' De Tocqueville, in stating his belief that in the case of an aristocratic community the freedom of the press can be dispensed with, reveals his instinctive bias in favour of the nobility. For him the traditions of a natural *élite* are sufficient guarantee of a free order of society. But what happens to a society when such a natural *élite* no longer exists? In a letter of the 5th of December 1835 to John Stuart Mill, de Tocqueville touched on the difficulties in principle of a political *élite*: 'I know not one friend of democracy who has yet dared to bring out in so precise and clear a manner the capital distinction between *delegation* and *representation*, or who has better fixed the political sense of the two words. Rest assured, my dear Mill, that you have touched there a question of the first magnitude. . . . It is a lesser question for the partisans of democracy to find means of governing the people than to get the people to choose the men most capable of governing [the italics are ours] and to give them in addition power enough to direct the latter in matters as a whole, but not in the details of their work nor the means of execution. *That is the problem. I am fully convinced that upon its solution depends the fate of the modern nations.*' (Our italics.) De Tocqueville has not provided us with an answer to this problem, as indeed nobody has to this very day.

In his great work, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*, which he began to write after he had retired from active politics having realized that Louis Napoléon only wanted tools, but no collaborators, de Tocqueville attempted to reveal the laws of the continuing revolution within French society. The *Ancien Régime* is not so much an historical treatise, but rather a study in socio-political history. Moreover, it was meant to uphold the eternal norms of Western political thought which so many of his contemporaries were apt to forget in enjoying the false glitter of the Second French Empire.

De Tocqueville was not deceived by the new 'plebiscitary democracy'. Thus we read in the preliminary note to his book which he published in 1856: 'Democratic communities which are not free may be rich, refined, adorned, magnificent, powerful by the weight of their uniform mass; they may contain many private merits, good fathers of families, honest traders, estimable men of property; nay,

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many good Christians will be found there, for their country is not of this world, and the glory of their faith is to produce such men amidst the greatest depravity of manners and under the worst government. The Roman Empire in its extreme decay was full of such men. But that which, I am confident, will never be found in such societies, is a great citizen, or above all, a great people; nay, I do not hesitate to affirm, that the common level of the heart and the intellect will never cease to sink as long as equality of conditions and despotic power are combined there.' Freedom alone can effectively counter the vices of a democracy which is not free. We have already seen how de Tocqueville conceives some of its fundamental institutional safeguards; but deeper perhaps than any constitutional definition, is its atmospheric character which men experience when they suffer from its want.

De Tocqueville was very far from denying the fresh impetus to French business which the Second Empire had brought with it. 'Business', he writes in a letter dated the end of November 1853, 'has a feverish character. The transactions at the Bourse can only be compared to those of Law's time. Public undertakings are multiplied in an extravagant manner. . . . Well, despite all that, unless the Government makes huge mistakes, it will last long enough and no-one is in a position to say how it will end and what will replace it.' Yet scarcely two months later de Tocqueville got a clearer view on this point. '*War alone can bring him [Louis Napoléon] to quick destruction, and war will destroy us all with him.*' (Our italics.) No illusions could dim the penetrating insight of the great political analyst.

Alexis de Tocqueville did not found a political school. He once described himself as a 'Liberal of a new kind'; as such a 'new liberal' his influence on the political parties of his time as indeed on the political groupings of coming generations of Frenchmen was negligible. The conservatives mistook him for a radical and the radicals for a conservative. They hardly realized that he attempted to define anew the vocabulary of contemporary politics.

Perhaps Pierre Joseph Proudhon (1809-65) belongs to the same spiritual family as de Tocqueville. He, too, is one of those very few political thinkers who are too great to be classified within *one* party. In contrast to de Tocqueville Proudhon came from a French artisan and peasant family. Of his political career one might perhaps say

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what has been said about that of Georges Sorel: he changed sides, but he never changed front. Like de Tocqueville his political thought attempted a synthesis of the social forces prevalent in French society. It is difficult if not impossible to give a short summary of the various stages of Proudhon's thought. He was a prolific writer and hardly any one of the many books he has written, is not diffuse or even baroque in composition and conception. When the Academy of Besançon granted him a scholarship, he dedicated his *Mémoire sur la Propriété* to his 'frères de travail et de misère'. On their front he fought throughout his life.

He conceives the structure of society as a perpetual antagonism of social forces which have to be brought to an equilibrium which is determined by the law of justice. This law of justice is for Proudhon a moral if not a metaphysical idea: 'The appreciation', he writes in his chief work, *La Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église* (published in 1858), 'of anything useful or harmful can be mistaken; consequently the law or convention which follows upon such judgement, can be without justice and should be revised. Justice is infallible and is imperative.' The State can never be regarded as guardian of Justice, nor can the Church or any Church. 'We deny the rule of the State, because we affirm the spirit and autonomy of the masses.' Proudhon has expressed his economic theory by which he expects to be able to overcome the authority of the State in these words:

'We have shown what we intend to replace the government by: namely industrial organization.'

'We replace laws by contracts. No more laws voted upon by a majority or unanimously; each citizen, commune, or corporation makes his own.'

'We replace political power by economic forces.'

'We replace the old classes of citizens, nobles and commoners, *bourgeoisie* and proletariat, by functional classes, namely agricultural, industrial, commercial, etc.'

'We replace public authority by collective force.'

'We replace the standing armies by industrial companies.'

'We replace the police by an identity of interests.'

'We replace political centralization by economic centralization.'

Thus Proudhon describes the programme of his revolution by

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which he means to establish a society based on a profound unity. Yet two points, though perhaps implicit in this brilliant exposition of his revolutionary belief, need further elucidation. Proudhon was a logical egalitarian. Justice and equality were the two points on which his political philosophy was firmly based. He rejected Saint-Simon's doctrine which had envisaged a social order based on 'capacity'—and he likewise disagreed with Fourier who had claimed a special place for those who showed 'talent'. 'The tendency of society', maintains Proudhon, 'is towards equality of intelligence and a levelling of conditions'. But this egalitarianism does not prevent him from excluding women. The woman is neither equal to man, nor is she his half, but 'the live and sympathetic complement who makes of him a personality'. His own married life was of exemplary purity and intimacy. His letters testify to this fully. Thus Proudhon writes to a friend in 1862 from Brussels where the Second Empire has driven him into exile: 'My wife works like a navvy, she suffers at times the torments of the damned, and she becomes mischievous as the devil. Yet because I am well cared for and she is obedient, I accept my lot with patience; one must pardon much who loves much, as the Gospel teaches us.' This personalist egalitarianism is an essential part of Proudhon's moral philosophy.

The other point which is implicit in Proudhon's above-quoted sentences which have explained to us his economic theory relates the latter to the realm of foreign policy. 'The renovation of the economic order, which starts by granting free credit and stabilizing the exchange rate, results in a mutual, federal organization, alone capable of ensuring equality without endangering liberty.' Thus writes C. Bouglé in his admirable essay *Socialismes français* (Paris, 1932). Surely federalism is not only an economic category. In his book, *Du principe fédératif et de la nécessité de reconstituer le parti de la Révolution*, which he published in 1863, Proudhon analyses with prophetic insight federalism in its political and economic significance. The starting point of his analysis was the problem of the unification of Italy, a problem on which at the same time Friedrich Engels and Ferdinand Lassalle had also written. But Proudhon in contrast to the German socialists is not blinded by the dangerous and fateful alliance between nationalism and liberalism. He writes: 'Unity to-day and since 1815, is simply a form of *bourgeois* exploitation under the protection of bayonets. . . . In a small State there

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is nothing for the *bourgeoisie* to pilfer. . . . It is said that Rome belongs to the Italians; I reply that Rome belongs to the Romans, as Naples belongs to the Neapolitans, Paris to the Parisians . . . in the name of unity you organize the destruction of nationalities. . . . Civilizing progress, the services given to the world are logically in inverse proportion to the greatness of empires . . . every collection of men within a well-defined territory and living an independent life, is predestined to become autonomous. . . . *The principle of federation in conjunction with that of separation of powers, is opposed to the sinister principle of the peoples' assembly and administrative centralization.* (Our italics.) Proudhon was perhaps right when he prophesied that the twentieth century will open the era of federalism, but it seems that our contemporary federalists would have much to profit from Proudhon.

Proudhon's influence on French political thought was immense. Only a summary indication of it can be given here. His book, *La guerre et la paix* (1861), has roused the enthusiasm of the *Action Française*. Perhaps not without some justification, for he writes in it: 'War is the deepest, the most sublime phenomenon of our moral life; no other can be compared to it: neither the impressive celebrations of church ceremony, nor the gigantic creations of industry. War gives the most powerful note in the harmonies of nature and humanity; it acts upon the soul like a clap of thunder, like the voice of the hurricane. Combination of genius and courage, of poetry and passion, of supreme justice and tragic heroism . . . its majesty astonishes, and the more it is contemplated, the more the heart is seized with enthusiasm.' But these sentences ought not to be read in isolation as the fascist interpreters of Proudhon are inclined to do. Proudhon's 'dialectical' method which Karl Marx so sharply criticized proceeds by showing the antagonistic structure of social life. His enthusiasm for war must be confronted with the following statement: '*The main cause of war is poverty, in other words the disturbance of the economic equilibrium. Overcome the main cause of war, and it will no longer exist.*' (Our italics.) Proudhon does not betray the norms which underlie his political philosophy.

With much greater justification than the *Action Française* can French Syndicalism claim Proudhon as its ancestor and great master. In his posthumous work, *De la capacité politique des classes ouvrières*, we read: 'Whether the *bourgeoisie* knows it or ignores it,

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its rôle is finished; it could not go further, it cannot be reborn. But let it give up its soul peacefully! The rising of the plebs will not eliminate it, in the sense that it would replace the *bourgeoisie* by its political preponderance, later by its privileges, property, and possessions, while the *bourgeoisie* would replace the plebs as the wage earners. The real distinction actually well established between the two classes, workers and *bourgeois*, is a simple revolutionary accident. *Both ought to absorb themselves in a higher being*; [our italics] and the day when the plebs, constituted as a majority, have seized power and have proclaimed, according to the new right and formulas of science, the economic and social reform, will be the day of definite fusion.' Proudhon never shared the views of the *Communist Manifesto*. Moreover, the historian is bound to say that he had a much deeper appreciation of the complicated dynamic of modern society than Karl Marx. In the formula of Léon Jouhaux, the leader of the C.G.T., 'Politics recede before Economics', we recognize the legacy of Proudhon's political thought.

### *(3) Liberal and Republican Opposition*

Louis Napoléon was right when he declared: 'There is a veritable conspiracy among men of letters against my government.' Victor Hugo wrote *Les Châtiments* which found their way to France from Jersey where he had found a poetic though lonely refuge. His *Napoléon Le Petit*, an historic account of the Second Republic, was hardly less effective. 'O Fatherland!' the great artist implores, 'I behold you at this hour, blood-dripping, lifeless, with your head dangling, eyes shut, mouth hanging open, speechless, stripes from the whip over your shoulders, the nails from the executioner's bludgeon imprinted on your whole body, like some dead object, a mark of contempt and derision. Alas, at this hour the heart of the prostrated verges on love and respect for you. Behold you unmoving! Despotic and oppressing men laugh and enjoy the illusion of no longer having to fear you; passing joys. The people in the shadows forget the past, they only see the present and despise it. Despise you. Good God, despise France! And who are they? What language do they speak? What books are in their hands? . . . What shape does their art assume, their laws, customs, clothes, leisure, fashions? Which is the greatest date for them, as for us? '89! If they tear France

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from their souls, what remains for them? O, you people! when she fell and fell for ever, did you despise Greece? Did you despise Italy? Do you despise France? . . . ' Liberty, Victor Hugo firmly believes, will rise again and with her he will return to France.

Naturally the opposition inside France had to adopt a less direct language. Liberal Catholics, Orléanists, Legitimists, parliamentarians, in short all friends of liberty were united against the dictator and his oppressive régime. Guizot, Montalembert, the Duc de Broglie, the editors of the *Débats* and the *Courrier du Dimanche*, all would have agreed with de Broglie's book, *Vues sur le gouvernement de la France*, which was written in 1861 and seized by the Emperor's police. Only two forms of government, thus the Duke maintains, are conceivable for France: a republic which touches constitutional monarchy; a constitutional monarchy differing from a republic only by permanence of her executive. 'Every other form of republic is the Convention; every other monarchy is the Empire.' It is essential for Frenchmen to discipline their character which is more revolutionary than reformist: 'No more for the nations than for their leaders are constitutions, according to the saying of Royer-Collard, tents erected to sleep in: *no-one is free, except he who wants to be so, who agrees to pay for liberty by work, trouble, risks, privations and who does not taste the fruit of the tree before he has planted it with his own hands and watered it with his tears.*' Hardly ever has the principle of freedom been better defined.

The centre of the intellectual opposition was the *Institut de France* and the *Académie Française*. Whenever they were able to irritate the Emperor the *Académiciens* did not fail to do so. They proposed for election Lacordaire in succession to Alexis de Tocqueville. But this was by no means the only case when they tried to displease the dictator.

In a letter to a friend, Prévost-Paradol (1829-76), of whom we shall have more to say presently, has given us a vivid description of how the younger generation enjoyed the fight against the régime. 'Long live the oppression that makes us use all our efforts, that takes its price for thought, that teaches us unmitigated force, subtle wisdom, and a laconic and caustic style! How favourable is this widespread silence! The discordant boasters are quiet; no more street singers; make way for the artists!' Even more revealing for the technique of the opposition are these sentences: 'What volup-

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tuousness to weigh and count the blows, and gently to thrust in the needle. Truly the pleasure is even greater than the honour.' Prévost-Paradol's life began in poverty. His mother was an actress of the *Comédie Française* who was struck by an incurable illness, his father an officer who had to live on his small pension. Friends of the Prévosts send the brilliantly gifted boy to the *Lycée Condorcet*. Later he entered the *École Normale* where he became a friend of Hippolyte Taine. The *coup d'état* of Louis Napoléon provides him with the opportunity to define his position in politics. He writes to Taine in a letter: 'You are not allowed to say that this power, illegal yesterday, will be legal in a week's time, endorsed by more than six million votes. An individual who has betrayed his pledges and surprised a people by a trick will never be legitimate. . . .'

After he had left the *École Normale* he begins a brilliant literary career. As collaborator of the *Courrier du Dimanche*, he goes to prison for a month, this being rather an honour under Louis Napoléon. When the Emperor in 1868 thought it wise to give his régime a more liberal appearance, his foreign minister, Daru, offered Prévost-Paradol the post as French Ambassador in Washington. In vain had Taine, the friend of his boyhood warned him: 'This craving for action, this uncontrolled tongue, this sensuality of desire will weaken your body, your will power and your brain.' Taine was only too right. Prévost-Paradol accepted the nomination, believing in the sincerity of the '*Empire libéral*'. He arrived in Washington the day France declared war on Prussia. Prévost-Paradol shot himself. Sensitive as he was, he may have felt that he had betrayed his friends and their (and his) cause. He did not apply the lesson to which he had given expression in an essay on Alexis de Tocqueville: 'At that time brilliant writing on politics appeared to give the right to participate in the affairs of the country; it had not yet been discovered that a fundamental incompatibility existed, which since seems to have been established, between action and thought. . . . But he was honest enough to pay the price for his tragic mistake.

In a noble and important book, *La France Nouvelle*, published in 1868, Prévost-Paradol has given his political testament. He shows there no interest in subtle distinctions between the 'words' monarchy or republic, he only wants to see France established as a free nation. Yet democracy is a political axiom for Prévost-Paradol: 'A democratic government can only have a democratic society as a

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foundation, and on the other hand a democratic society seems to enable and call for the construction of such an edifice. But this edifice may not possibly have yet been built, and its place occupied by all sorts of provisional constructions, or yet again it might have been built and overthrown, therefore only the ruins are seen. In both cases one sees a democratic society bereft of its natural government and deprived, in spite of appearances and custom, even of the right to call itself a *democracy*.' That a democratic government ought to be based on a democratic society is an important idea. But if one examines Prévost-Paradol's political philosophy somewhat more closely, one is bound to discover that he has hardly realized the fundamental incompatibility of political equality and economic inequality: the eternal theme of the great revolutionary process of Western society.

Consequently we are not surprised to read in *La France Nouvelle*: 'It is one of the most depressing symptoms of the times through which we are passing and of the moral weakening of the country to see that the rich people do not foster independence, and that the desire to rule does not emanate naturally from them.' In socialism Prévost-Paradol sees only a regrettable confusion between the duties of the State and the functions of public assistance. The ideas of Proudhon or Karl Marx do not seem to have permeated into the illustrious circle of the *Académie Française*. Instead of providing us with an economic theory as a basis on which any democratic society can be built, Prévost-Paradol sees the only outlet and hope for the declining French population in Africa. 'In Africa it is time to establish laws which are solely conceived with a view to the extension of French colonization and let the Arabs withdraw as best they may from the battle of life on equal terms. Africa is a French territory which should be populated, possessed, and cultivated by Frenchmen *as quickly as possible*, if we want her to weigh on our side of the balance in human affairs.' Perhaps it was this liberal imperialism which made Prévost-Paradol come to terms with the '*Empire libéral*'.

Again, as after 1815, French Liberalism turned to England. Montalembert publishes his book *De l'avenir politique de l'Angleterre* in 1856 which gives perhaps the best interpretation of the trend of political thought during this period. The following sentences are characteristic: 'The progress of democracy is the domi-

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nant fact in modern society, but it is also the supreme danger: and no country has yet known how to avoid this danger. To restrain and regulate democracy without degrading it, to organize it in a tempered monarchy, or in a conservative republic, such is the problem of our age; but this problem has not yet been resolved at all.' If it can be solved *at all*, it is to England and to her institutions that we must turn: 'The fact and the danger exist in England as elsewhere. But whereas on the continent the victory of democracy everywhere ended in the sacrifice of liberty, and condemned the people to vacillate between the humiliating alternatives of anarchy and despotism, *everything tends to show that in England its progress was reconciled with the stability of law, with the maintenance of ancient liberties, and with respect for the dignity of the individual.* [Our italics.] If it is thus, as we firmly believe, England alone among the great nations of Europe, after having preserved her honour and her public life from the invasions of monarchists in the past two centuries, will have the glorious privilege to uphold the arch of justice and liberty in the middle of the deluge, while revolutionary democracy threatens to submerge ours.' Alcxis de Tocqueville has—in a letter to Montalembert—expressed the view that this book shows 'the true and strong feeling for liberty'. Eighty-four years later—in 1940—many Frenchmen saw again in England the only hope for the future of France and for the cause of European unity.

Amongst the Republican opposition there were first the great *proscrits*, Victor Hugo and the historian Edgar Quinet (1803–75) who published during the Second Empire his study on the French Revolution, and who, together with his friend Michelet, has inspired French youth with a passionate love for a republican democracy. He held a professorship in the *Collège de France*, but lost it after the *coup d'état* and was forced to live as an exile in Switzerland. Then there were the exiled Louis Blanc and Ledru-Rollin who both had found refuge in Great Britain.

French Republican youth grouped itself less around these *vieilles barbes*, but rather around the 'parliamentary' opposition which after the election of 1863 had risen to thirty-five members. Their young leader was the brilliant barrister Léon Gambetta (1838–82). He was a great orator, full of ambition and vitality. He had read, though perhaps not very profoundly, Proudhon, Auguste Comte; he cites Mirabeau and Danton; he knows his Victor Hugo and Rabé-

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lais by heart. The old Thiers says of him: 'M. Gambetta is what we in France call a republican. But he has more spirit, common sense, and true brilliance than many enlightened conservatives. . . .' With him perhaps, if such a generalization is permitted, the incompatibility of political theory and political practice seems to establish itself in France—and indeed not only in France. Emile Ollivier has painted an impressive portrait of the young tribune: 'He supplemented all that he lacked by a lively intuition, a powerful faculty for assimilation, divining much, not suffering much from having learnt little. . . . He was bold after the Italian model, in a good humour even in difficult circumstances, cool headed in the middle of trouble, adaptable even in extreme difficulty . . . preferring to appear generous, and ready not to be so, believing that a sure way of dominating men is not to take them seriously, unsurpassed, even after Garibaldi, at finding big empty phrases that enthuse the masses.' The mass age of which de Tocqueville has warned us reveals itself. How can political thought and action be reconciled or brought together? Not only is this question relevant for France. It would have to be raised also in a history of English or German political thought after 1870 or shortly before that date. Certainly there are the idealists T. H. Green and Bosanquet in England, and Renouvier in France; there are Comte, Renan, and Taine in France and Herbert Spencer and his school in England; and do not the constitutional lawyers like Maitland, the translator of Otto von Giercke, and his school, correspond to Duguit or Esmein? But where are the Sieyès, the Royer-Collards, the de Tocquevilles in our modern parliaments?

But let us return to Léon Gambetta. Let us listen to his voice which in 1868 stirred up the awakening Republican France: 'Listen! For seventeen years you have been the absolute and discreet masters of France—that is your own phrase—we will not look for the uses to which you have put her treasures, blood, her honour and glory; of that you are the best judge. Because it is the witness of your own remorse, you have never dared to say: "We will celebrate, we will put among the solemnities of France the 2nd of December as a national anniversary." And nevertheless all the régimes which have succeeded each other have honoured the day of their birth. They have celebrated the 14th July, the 10th August; the days of July 1830 have also been celebrated, just as the 24th

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February; there are only two anniversaries, the 18th Brumaire and the 2nd December which have never been placed among the ranks of the festivals of birth, because you know that if you wanted to put them there they would be repulsed by a universal conscience. Well, this anniversary that you did not want, we will take as our own, we will celebrate for ever without ceasing, each year; it will be the anniversary of our dead until the day when this country, once again master, will impose a great national expiation on you in the name of liberty, equality, and fraternity.' The historical exactness of Gambetta's speech has been disputed, but this by no means minimizes the impression it made.

### *(4) The Commune*

In the meantime the personnel of the Commune gathered clandestinely. 'The last years of the Empire have prepared', writes André Bellessort in his important study *La Société française sous Napoléon III* (Paris, 1932), 'the personnel of the Commune. The cafés and the clubs have instructed its general staff.'

The German armies took the fortress of Paris after a long siege. The victors celebrated their victory by marching down the *Champs-Élysées* on the 1st of March 1871. Two days before the National Assembly, elected after the capitulation of Paris, decided to move to Versailles—it had first met at Bordeaux—a revolutionary Government established itself in Paris which lasted for seventy days until it was bloodily broken up by the Government of Versailles which was headed by Adolphe Thiers.

The Commune, with its history, or probably more correctly, its *myth* written by Marx, was for several reasons a decisive event in French social history and indeed in the social history of the West, Russia included. First: it finally created a tradition of a violent and socially uncompromising class-struggle in France, thus reviving the previous stages of civil war in France as exemplified by the revolt of Lyons in 1831 and of the vain rising of the Paris proletariat in June 1848. Second: with its 20,000 victims in killed and almost 140,000 people arrested, the Commune became in international socialist thought a symbol of class antagonism between *bourgeoisie* and proletariat, alleged to be insoluble by peaceful means. Karl Marx's well-known pamphlet, on *The Civil War in France* was

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written as an address of the First International and became subsequently, particularly since Lenin based on it his work, *State and Revolution*, a socialist classic.

Lenin's comment on the Commune is relevant here, if one wishes to understand the development of French political thought from 1918-40, for probably no other book by Lenin was as widely read and commented on as this. Thus he writes in *State and Revolution*: 'It is well known that in the autumn of 1870, a few months prior to the Commune, Marx warned the Paris workers that an attempt to overthrow the government would be the folly of despair. But when, in March 1871, a decisive battle was forced upon the workers and they accepted it, when the uprising had become a fact, Marx welcomed the proletarian revolution with the greatest enthusiasm, in spite of unfavourable auguries. . . . Marx, however, was not only enthusiastic about the heroism of the Communards who "stormed the heavens" as he expressed himself. He saw in the mass revolutionary movement, although it did not attain its aim, an historic experiment of gigantic importance, a certain advance of the world proletarian revolution, a practical step more important than hundreds of programmes and discussions. To analyse this experiment, to draw from it lessons in tactics, to re-examine his theory in the new light it afforded—such was the problem as it presented itself to Marx. . . .'<sup>1</sup> It led Marx to a revision of certain points in his *Communist Manifesto*, particularly he stressed the thesis that the 'working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery and wield it for its own purposes'. (Cf. Marx and Engels's preface to a new edition of the *Communist Manifesto*, published in 1872.)

Again as in other parts of our essay in interpretation of French political thought we are not concerned with the history of the Commune. (For an admirable account see Georges Bourgin, *Histoire de la Commune*, Paris, 1907.) It was the myth of the Commune which left its deep mark on French political philosophy.

<sup>1</sup> I have shown in my book, *Political Thought: the European Tradition*, second edition, London, 1942, pp. 437 ff., the importance of the above discussed work by Lenin for the ideological development of the Russian Revolution.

## IV.

# The Third Republic

Napoléon III had become Bismarck's prisoner of war. On September 4th the republican deputies of Paris met at the Hôtel de Ville and declared a provisional Government led by Général Trochu, the military governor of Paris. One of its members was Adolphe Thiers (1797–1877), who negotiated the armistice with Bismarck. On the 13th February 1871 the National Assembly, elected after the fall of Paris, met in Bordeaux. Its majority was composed of monarchists though these were by no means united. Legitimists, Orléanists, and Bonapartists could hardly be expected to accept one political formula. The majority being unable to compromise on one monarchist head, the National Assembly elected Adolphe Thiers as 'Chief of the Executive Power of the French Republic'.

The choice is easy to understand. Did not Thiers represent a minimum of continuity of two generations of French history? He had served as minister under Louis Philippe, he was the leader of the *parti de l'ordre* during the Second Republic, he had stood for the *libertés nécessaires* under Louis Napoléon, and he had opposed the war in 1870. Thiers was 73 years old when the representatives of the French nation decided to make him the successor of Napoléon I, of Louis Philippe, of Napoléon III. In times of national crisis old men seem to exert a peculiar fascination on those who have been called upon to voice the feelings and sentiments and to a somewhat lesser extent the judgements of a people. Yet in the case of Thiers the dignity of age was not a myth of vain glory on the battlefield, his choice was rather the victory of common sense or perhaps better of the *honnête homme* to whom he had himself appealed so impressively in a speech he made in 1872: 'Take the honest man in our society. At a manly age he takes a mate. What is his greatest care? I am speaking of the honest man. It is to work constantly, well, and honestly, to secure the well-being of his wife, his children, and him-

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self; not only that of the present, but also that of the future. There you have your honest man. . . . ' This *honnête homme* only thinks of death in the last hours of life. Against him Thiers holds another picture, not less impressive. 'But here is quite a different society: take in the country one of the people who have not participated in our upbringing, who have not been fed on the *grandeur*s of our history . . . and you say to one of these men: you shall not think of your well-being. While everything around you is peaceful society owes it to you to uphold your strength by an adequate standard of living; she owes it to you not to let you run unnecessary risks. But peace will be nothing but an accident in your life; when necessary you will endure cold and heat, you will throw yourself into the ice of the Beresina, and with little hope of saving the army, you will die in order to save it. You will undergo the blazing heat of Africa; and your honour and glory will be your death under the flag . . . thus is the soldier made.' Order of the *honnête homme* and glory of the soldier—Thiers had no difficulty in combining both ideas. His entire political career was guided by common sense which he had already defined almost forty years before he had risen to be the head of the French nation. 'A man in the government', he said in 1834, 'must have common sense, that is the primary political quality; and if one has the good fortune to possess it, another quality is necessary, and that is the courage to show that one has it. In the time in which we live, what I say has a great message. There is no dearth of people with common sense; that is not very extraordinary, since the sense is called common; what we need are people who dare show they have got it.' He might have said the same in 1870 and it would be unjust to blame Adolphe Thiers for lack of courage. For it needed courage to address Napoléon III's imperial parliament in 1864 with these words: 'French soil is covered with the debris of these governments. . . . I have studied our country, and I think that I know it well. To whom has it assigned the mission of studying the affairs of the country, of discussing them sincerely and impartially and also of widening and enhancing them? . . . I thus declare here as an upright man: if this liberty were given us, I, for one, would accept it, and I could be counted among the humble and grateful citizens of the empire. . . . But take care! This country which to-day allows only a submissive voice to be raised may one day exact otherwise.' The liberty for which Thiers stood, however, was the liberty

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of man in an order in which the poor had to regard their lot as the 'unavoidable sum of sufferings', for which not the rich were to be regarded as responsible, but God who makes man suffer in order to provoke him to work, to live. This was the gist of Thiers's social philosophy which he had expounded in a book on *Property* published in 1848. He would not have written it differently in 1870, as his ruthless suppression of the Commune proves. Thiers was sincere when he said in a speech in 1871: 'There are some enemies of the existing order who say that we are preparing to overthrow the Republic. I formally declare that it is a lie. They lie to France; they want to upset and agitate her. We have found the Republic as an established fact, in which we had no say. But I will not destroy the form of government which I now use to re-establish order.' The voice of the *honnête homme* is unmistakable.

In 1873 Thiers, as a result of a conspiracy by the monarchists of the Assembly, tendered his resignation. His successor as President of the Third Republic was Marshal MacMahon. One would have expected the majority of the Assembly to form a monarchical government, 'but the sole result of the 24th of May 1873', as Messrs. Paul Wirath and J. E. C. Bodley have put it very aptly in their excellent book, *A Short History of France* (reproduced from the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, London, 1914), 'was to provide a definite date to mark the opening of the era of anti-republican incompetency in France which lasted for more than a generation, and has been perhaps the most effective guardian of the Third Republic'. It took the National Assembly almost another two years to enact the statutes which are now known as the 'Constitution of 1875' which remained the basis of French constitutional life until the capitulation of Bordeaux in June 1940. In contrast to the French Constitutions of 1791 or to the *Charte*, or to the Constitution of 1848 the legislators of 1875 refrained from stating any political philosophy of the kind of the declaration of rights, they restricted themselves to working out the structures of a formal machinery of government of which apart from the acceptance of the principles of universal suffrage the main points were: the two houses, Chamber and Senate, had to form themselves into a National Assembly for any constitutional change or in order to choose the President of the Republic whose term of office was fixed for seven years. Thus any plebiscitary danger seemed

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to be banned. The Senate was given considerable powers to amend and to reject financial bills which had to originate from the Chamber. (For the factual details of the constitution of the Third Republic see the standard work, *Les Constitutions et les principales lois politiques de la France* par Léon Duguit et Henry Monnier continué par Roger Bonnard, 5th edition, Paris, 1932, a work indispensable for any study of French political thought.)

Obviously it cannot be our task to analyse here the political history of France though we have touched upon it in order to give our interpretation of French political philosophy a firm institutional foundation. We return, therefore, to the sphere of political thought proper though within the given framework of this study we are only able to offer examples of the continuing development of French political ideas.

### *(1) Politics of Positivism: Comte, Taine, Renan*

August Comte (1798–1857) was a pupil of Saint-Simon. He attended the Polytechnic School of Paris between 1814 and 1816; from 1817 until 1824 he worked with Saint-Simon whose influence on Comte was considerable. In 1830 the first volume of his *Cours de philosophie positive* appeared; in 1842 this colossal work was completed. Of his later works the *Système de politique positive* is probably the most significant. We need not enter into a discussion of how far Comte only perfected the work of Saint-Simon, being much more of a scholar than his great master. His main endeavour was to secure a scientific foundation for politics. His law of the three stages, though already clearly formulated by Saint-Simon who himself had taken it from Condorcet's *Tableau Historique des Progrès de l'Esprit humain* (1795), enables him to give an analysis of social statics and dynamics in the history of nations and individuals alike: the first stage is the theological, the second the metaphysical, then finally the third stage is that of positive science. If a positive science of society is possible, then a scientific approach to politics is found. He followed de Maistre and to a lesser extent de Bonald when he maintained that the individual owed everything to society. Apart from society the individual is a mere abstraction. He stressed the importance of authority, and while he rejected Catholicism (like every other theological doctrine) the second phase of his life was

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devoted to building up a kind of positivist Catholicism; yet with this later phase of his life and philosophy we must not concern ourselves here as it has hardly exercised any serious influence.

His authoritarianism is clearly expressed in the *Cours de philosophie positive* (IV, 40) in the following striking passage: 'There is no freedom of conscience at all in astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology; but I thereby mean that everybody would deem it absurd not to believe in the principles established in their field *by competent men*. [Our italics.] If it is otherwise in politics it is because the old principles are outworn and the new as yet unformed; thus properly speaking, in this interval there are no established principles.' The proviso 'in this interval' is important. Comte intends not to impose on men a kind of spiritual despotism as J. S. Mill had suggested, he only wants to see methods applied also in the realm of politics—considered as positive science—methods which the other sciences are used to seeing employed. His organic conception of society does not imply the suppression of the individual. He rejects the collectivist or rather communist Utopias of some of his contemporaries: 'Such is the danger of all Utopias that sacrifice *true liberty* [our italics] to an anarchistic equality, or even to an exaggerated comradeship.' (*Pol.*, pos. I, 159.) Capitalists and workers alike are or have to be public functionaries. 'Consequently', comments in this context Lévy-Bruhl in his fundamental study on *La Philosophie d'Auguste Comte* (Paris, 1913), 'in a "truly constituted" society [notice this expression which M. de Bonald often uses] the common distinction between public and private functions is destined to be wiped out. In the same way, in an army the most obscure soldier has his own dignity, which emanates from the strict solidarity in the military organism, since all take part in the same honour; just as when positive education has made everyone aware of the rôle to be played in the social work, the professions themselves will be enriched.' The industrial régime of Comte's contemporary world is defined by a struggle of egoisms, in short by the absence of a régime. It is the task of positivism to provide for a communal moral education, a task to which Comte devoted the later years of his life.

*Savoir pour prévoir, pour pourvoir* was the motto of Comte's 'sociology'—he was the first to introduce this term into our Western scientific terminology, meaning thereby a kind of philosophy of

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history which states the laws of social statics and social dynamics. Comte's positivist sociology expresses clearly the confident belief of the industrial age that all problems inherent in this period of the history of mankind could be solved *scientifically*.

Comte's attempt to formulate the laws of scientific politics exerted considerable influence. Hippolyte Taine (1828-98) and Ernest Renan (1823-92) bear witness to the methodological importance of Comte's sociology. Taine 'discovered' Comte around 1860. 'For the first time', Taine writes in an appreciation of Comte's positivist philosophy, 'a man has studied what science is, not in general terms following a speculative idea, or as one says, in the air as other philosophers have done, but following the existing and accepted sciences . . . for the birth and development of the positive sciences has been the chief event of history for three centuries. No other human edifice, State, religion, or literature, can be considered unassailable, on the contrary the interrelations of the sciences are infinite. . . One can foresee that a time will come when they will reign sovereign over all the thought as over all the action of man, leaving nothing to their rivals but a rudimentary existence, parallel to those imperceptible organs in plants or animals which almost disappear, absorbed by the immense interrelationship with their neighbours.' Taine envisages here a perfect science able to guide man scientifically even in the realm of action, which in fact means politics.

We need not concern ourselves here with Taine's philosophy of art or literature where he attempted to apply Comte's method: his theory of the 'moment' and of the '*milieu*' are certainly influenced by Comte, what we have to examine is Taine's political philosophy. Two events have marked his political thought: the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoléon and the defeat of France by Prussia in 1870, more particularly the Commune in 1871. The son of a comfortably well-to-do French *bourgeois* family whose brilliant career at the *École Normale* should have secured him a position in Paris, was sent to the provinces to teach philosophy, 'far from liberty and from science'. His political views, so the authorities of Louis Napoléon's government thought, were too dangerous to keep the young professor in the metropolis. The '*coup d'état*' in 1851 made him realize 'the oppression weighing on all independent character, on all free spirit'. He bitterly blamed the Catholic Church for her rallying with

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the dictatorial régime: 'the Catholic Church allied to a repressive government, and its clergy appearing not only as its effective minister but also as the central promoter of all repression'. Thus under Louis Napoléon's régime Taine lived according to the advice he gave his friend Prévost-Paradol in a letter of the 11th of December 1851: 'Be quiet, obedient, and let your life be in science.' In education Taine sees a remedy against the plebiscitary régime.

The Commune makes him despair: 'My heart is dead in my breast.' French liberty is threatened by the Reds and the Bonapartists: 'The two enemies of liberty are with us the Reds and the Bonapartists.' Universal suffrage he characterizes as 'the hiding-place of the demagogic monster'. He is against any absolute power whether it is in the hands of the masses or of an individual. His social philosophy is expressed in a letter of the 29th of November 1871: 'The essential is for the rich and enlightened classes to guide the ignorant and those who live from day to day.'

The shock of the year 1871 made Taine undertake his great work, *Les Origines de la France contemporaine*. Cannot history provide us with a key to the future? *Savoir pour prévoir, pour pourvoir*. Cannot the moral and historic sciences provide us with a cure for a defeated France? thus Taine asked himself now. It was the problem which de Tocqueville had attempted to solve when he wrote his *Ancien Régime et la Révolution*. Giraud in his penetrating essay, *Sur Taine* (Paris, 1909), has taught us that 'the governing ideas of the *Origines*, to know that the Revolution has its deepest roots in all our previous history, was also that of de Tocqueville's book; and I would also venture to state that the "decentralizing" tendencies of Taine, came in great part from his . . . predecessor'. Another influence is as obvious, namely Burke's, whom Taine describes as 'the most profound theorist of political liberty' and whose '*Reflections on the French Revolution*' are 'a prophecy as well as a *chef-d'œuvre*'.

The constitution of a people is predestined by history and nature. Consequently the social and political structures of France must first be *studied*. Only if we know what we *are*, is it possible to say what we *need*. The *Origines* represent a powerful though not unbiased study of French social history since the eighteenth century. Taine died before he was able to complete it. As a product of historical research the results of the *Origines* have been severely criticized

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and challenged by Alphonse Aulard in a book, *Taine: Historien de la Révolution française* (Paris, 1907). 'He wanted to rewrite the history of the Revolution to justify his conservative and traditionalist theory. . . .' This criticism is certainly to some extent justified, Taine's own fundamental political experiences, the *coup d'état* and the *Commune* have blinded his scientific objectivity. At this period of his life Taine was very near to Le Play's Christian positivism. Having married only at a mature age, he shared with Le Play the view that the foundation of a healthy state organization is to be seen in an unpolluted family life. Le Play's works, particularly his *Réforme Sociale en France*, revealed to Taine and to many others of his contemporaries the spirit of 'a rejuvenated Bonald, progressive and scientific' as Sainte-Beuve has characterized Le Play. The science of positivism in becoming political fails to objectivize its own presuppositions though this should by no means prove to be impossible.

Perhaps it is easier to establish the fundamental doctrine of Taine's political philosophy from his *Notes on England* which he published in 1871; Taine knew England very intimately: he had paid visits to the British Isles in 1858, in 1860, in 1861, in 1862, and in 1871; he had given a series of lectures to receive an honorary degree from the University of Oxford. 'For eighty years', we read in the *Notes*, 'our publicists have reasoned themselves blind concerning constitutions; I know one among the most eminent who would transport that of England or the United States to France, and asks two years only for rendering the nation accustomed to it. One of them said to me, "It is the locomotive; it is enough to bring it across the water, and instantly it will replace the diligence." In fact, nearly all Europe has attempted or adopted the English system—monarchy more or less tempered, Lower and Upper House, elections, etc. Consider how grotesque the result has been. . . . To import the locomotive is not everything: to make it run is requisite. Or, rather, one ought to put aside all comparisons drawn from mechanical things; the constitution of a state is an organic thing like that of a living body, it pertains to the State alone; another cannot assimilate it, the outside merely can be copied. Underneath institutions, charters, written laws, the official almanac, there are the ideas, the customs, the character, the condition of classes, their respective position, their reciprocal sentiments; in short, a ramified

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network of deep-seated, invisible roots beneath the visible trunk and foliage. It is they which feed and sustain the tree. Plant the tree without roots, it will languish, and will fall at the first gust.' Taine has read his Burke well. One sees why the Frenchman admired the English Governmental system.

Taine is by no means blind with regard to the class structure of the British social system. 'Doubtless', he writes when he is describing the British politician, 'it is unfortunate that hereditary riches and rights should serve unjustly to crown an entire class, and in consequence, some rascals, several brutes, and a quantity of mediocrities. But it is at this price that a select few can be found. . . . Consider that, without competent chiefs, a State cannot prosper and that there are cases where, for want of a great man, a State falls; can you pay too dearly for a certain contingent of competent chiefs, and the frequent chance of a great statesman?' The answer was obvious to Taine and it was the British model as analysed here which provides us with the key to the *Origines*.

In one respect it is important to turn back now to this work. As an old man he seems to have revised his ideas about the function of the Christian religion in Western society. Whereas in 1857 he had remarked about Royer-Collard that what prevented him from being a true philosopher was that he was bound (*lié*) by 'the most common conviction, namely love of order and Christianity'; with the experience of age Taine wrote thus about Christianity in the *Origines*: 'After eighteen centuries Christianity is once more to-day the spiritual belief of 400 million human beings. The great pair of indispensable wings have raised man above himself always and everywhere for eighteen hundred years; as soon as the wings failed or they were broken, public and private morals were degraded. In Italy during the Renaissance, in England under the Restoration, in France under the *Convention*, and *Directoire* man was seen pagan. . . . Cruelty and sensuality spread, society became cut-throat. When one sees this spectacle from close quarters one can evaluate the influence of Christianity in our modern society. Neither reason, culture, artistic or literary, nor government can supplant it in this field. *Only this can hold us to our birthright . . .* and the old Evangelism, *whatever its present form* is again to-day the best auxiliary of social instinct.' From what we have seen further above, Royer-Collard would have raised no objection here. It is true

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that these sentences do not imply that Hyppolyte Taine has made his peace with the Catholic Church for he says expressly in a letter of the 9th of December 1891: 'That which seems to me to be incompatible in religion and modern science is not Christianity but Roman Catholicism. On the other hand with the wide liberal Protestantism conciliation is possible.' Even here—speaking of contemporary Catholicism—Taine wisely leaves a door open for a future reconciliation between Church and State, so profoundly needed for his great country.

Ernest Renan was educated in a clerical seminary, but broke with his teachers and later on with Catholicism altogether. He shared with Taine his appreciation of German philosophy. Taine was influenced to a very considerable extent by Hegel, Renan more by men like Herder and Bopp. For both the war of 1870-1 was the disillusionment of their hopes, particularly after they had experienced the harsh peace terms which Bismarck imposed on defeated France.

In 1848 Renan wrote his book, *L'Avenir de la Science*, which he published only in 1890. In it he developed an enthusiastic belief in science and its significance for the peoples. It is a not very profound though brilliantly written programme of a democratic philosophical optimism. But this optimism was soon undermined by the *coup d'état* in 1851. During the Second Empire he devoted himself entirely to his studies on religious history which won him world fame. Later on under the Third Republic he was appointed as Director of the *Collège de France*.

We do not intend to follow here the subtle ways of his philosophical ideas which finally led him to the delicate scepticism of the *Dialogues philosophiques*. But his delight in frightening his readers with his superbly played game of antinomies hardly hides the remaining substance of his thought: his confidence in science, in human progress, and his veneration of the ideal. In 1862 Napoléon III made him a professor of Hebrew at the *Collège de France*. He announced his forthcoming *Life of Jesus* with the following sentences under the applause of his audience: 'An incomparable man—so great that while everything here should be judged from the point of view of positive science, I would not contradict those who, struck by the exceptional character of his work, called him God—he made a reform of Judaism, a reform so profound, so individual that

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in truth it was an entire creation.' Naturally four days later Renan was deposed from his chair. These sentences are typical of Renan's spiritual attitude.

Renan's political philosophy expresses itself in an essay which he wrote shortly after 1871, *La Réforme intellectuelle et morale*. Nowhere perhaps can we grasp the mental atmosphere of French political thought during this period more clearly than in this study. It is a retrospective analysis of French history and gives at the same time a clear though pessimistic perspective of the future. The *Réforme* exerted a profound influence on Georges Sorel. It may have appeared to him as the last evidence of a contemporary of the significance of the 2nd of December 1851.

The disillusionment about Germany and the horror of the consequence of the unchecked application of universal suffrage in France are indeed the guiding principles of the *Réforme*. 'The dream of my life', Renan writes with regard to Germany, '... was to work in the feeble measure of my forces for the intellectual, moral, and political alliance of France and Germany including that with Britain, and forming a force capable of governing the world in the way of liberal civilization, at an equal distance from democracy and from the puerile anticipation of a return to the past which cannot be relived.' This dream is finally and irrevocably destroyed. 'Germany', Renan writes further on, 'is no more than a nation; she is at the hour when she is the most strong of the nations; but one knows how long these hegemonies last and what they have after them; the nation which shuts itself into the pure consideration of its own interests no longer has a world-wide rôle.' There is no final injustice in history. The day of revenge will come—and it came and will come again.

The memory of the *coup d'état* is still vivid in his mind. 'For ten years we went in mourning for the Right.' What did the men of 1848 give to France? 'They gave to France what she did not ask for—universal suffrage; they did not dream that this suffrage would only benefit five million peasants, strangers to all liberal thought.' Some pages further on Renan characterizes the attitude of the French peasant as he found it in 1869 towards the French Government: 'A cheap government imposing little, worrying little, with an honest desire for liberty, a total indifference to the glory of the country, making sacrifices to impalpable interests. That appears to

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me the peasant spirit in the part of France where, as one says, the peasant is most advanced.' Renan condenses here as in other parts of the *Réforme* sociological observations which he made during the election campaign of 1869. France, as a result of universal suffrage, maintains Renan, has become materialistic. What has just been said with regard to the French peasant is also valid *mutatis mutandis* for the French worker. 'This is the provincial spirit which the Emperor served so well during the first years of his reign.' Furthermore, to complete the picture, the French province found itself in an almost hostile attitude towards Paris which was regarded to be revolutionary. 'It is the ruling Paris which France dislikes. Paris is a synonym in France for worrying exigencies. It is Paris which raises the men who absorb the money which it employs for a mass of ends which the Provinces do not understand.' There is an unmistakable decline in the French political *élite* which until the end of the seventeenth century has been so great. This process has been speeded up by the Second Empire. 'With a universal suffrage, unorganized and free to chance, France can only have a social head without intelligence or knowledge, without prestige or authority.' What are the remedies Renan has to propose to restore his country's moral and intellectual leadership?

Renan answers by way of brilliant antinomy. He first defends the case of a royalist solution. France has been created by her kings, her aristocracy, her clergy, her *Tiers État*. 'The people and the peasants, to-day absolute masters in the house, are in reality intruders there. Unwanted wasps in a hive they did not construct.' You can be a royalist, thus Renan defends the royalist case, without believing in the Divine right of kings. 'The dynasty is in a sense before and above the nation, for it is the dynasty which has made the nation; but it can do nothing against the nation nor without it.' But all this is purely dialectical. Renan knows that in politics one has to reckon with facts and not with dreams, however pleasant the latter may appear. 'In politics one does not discuss imaginary solutions.'

France *must* live as a democracy and prove by the facts that a republic is a possibility. 'May France remain what she is; may she uphold unfailingly the flag of liberalism which has been her rôle for the past hundred years.' Having thus put his antinomy which France has to face in 1871 before the reader, Renan proceeds to

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indicate in some details certain reforms without which the future of France might be rather unstable. This part of the *Réforme* makes fascinating reading to-day.

Renan proposes first a thorough reform of universal suffrage. The details need not concern us, but the general principle is important. 'One must admit', he writes cautiously, 'that every citizen has a certain right in the direction of public affairs; *but this right must be regulated and used in an enlightened way.*' (Our italics.) He also envisages a Senate of a structure quite different from the constitutional laws of 1875 then finally established. Administrative decentralization, freedom of the press, colonization are other points of Renan's reform. In the latter point he is though insistent very weak. He merely repeats what he may have already found in Hegel's *philosophy of right*: 'A nation which does not colonize is irrevocably wedded to socialism, to the war between rich and poor.' Renan never seriously questioned the property qualifications of Western society. 'Freedom of work, free competition, free usage of property, the right to become rich according to one's ability,' all this seemed to Renan the essential guarantees against an unwarranted State intervention which would only lead to unstable dictatorships.

But Renan is again in a congenial sphere when he discusses the problems of education and of the relationship of State and Church, so intimately linked in France with these problems: 'Church and School', he writes, 'are equally necessary; a nation can neither do without one or the other; *if Church and School quarrel, everything goes wrong.*' (Our italics.) The history of the Third Republic would have turned out differently if this warning of the great historian had been taken into account. With secondary education in France, Renan is fairly satisfied, but against the over-centralized University education he raises serious and probably justified objections. 'One must close the *écoles spéciales*, *École polytechnique*, *École Normale*, etc., useless institutions if one has a good University system. . . .' Finally, Renan stands for separation of Church and State. Here, again, he seems to be profoundly apprehensive of the future. 'Until now France has known only two poles; catholicism and democracy; always oscillating between one and the other, she never finds rest. *To serve penance for her demagogic excesses, France throws herself into a narrow catholicism; to react against a narrow catholicism,*

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*she throws herself into a false democracy.'* (Our italics.) Renan's warnings remained unheard. Disillusioned from politics the great historian resumed after 1871 his scientific work.

### *(2) Politics of Irrationalism: Maurice Barrès and Charles Maurras*

From the 4th of September 1870 to June 1940 the Third Republic saw more than a hundred changing cabinets. None of them lasted for three years, some, though very few, it is true, lasted for more than two years, but the average duration of a French cabinet was hardly longer than a few months, some of them lasted only for days. This fundamental instability of the French central government manifested itself in various crises which shook French society to its very foundations. The *coup d'état* after the capitulation of Bordeaux in June 1940 seems only the logical result of a structural instability. This essay does not intend to give an analysis of the final breakdown of the Third Republic except by way of implication. We are too near to this event and what is perhaps more relevant with regard to the purpose of this book, it might prove difficult to attain that impartiality of judgement without which the history of political thought cannot or should not be written.

Through the medium of Maurice Barrès (1862–1928) it would appear not too difficult to grasp the fundamental political implications of the two great crises which are commonly implied by the names of General Boulanger and Dreyfus. (For the best account now available in English we should like to refer the reader to the admirable book by D. W. Brogan, *The Development of Modern France, 1870–1939*, London, 1940.)

Maurice Barrès came from Lorraine. He was eight years old when he saw the beaten French army which a few weeks earlier was so confident of victory, retreat from battle before the advancing Germans. He will never forget this experience. Barrès was educated at the *lycée* of Nancy, before he came to Paris. Charles Maurras (born in 1868) was amongst the circle of his Parisian friends. In Paris the passionate imagination of young Barrès, nourished by Baudelaire and Flaubert, came under the discipline of Taine and Renan. The ideas of *La Réforme intellectuelle et morale* influence Barrès profoundly. Taine was his other mentor. He was to Barrès 'the best

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analyst of his time, one of the most enlightened scholars of history'. Taine's philosophy of history led Barrès to the belief that the individual is the highest expression of 'race'. 'Milieu' and 'race' are the keys to an understanding of the individual. But it is significant that Barrès qualifies the determinist note of Renan's and Taine's philosophies. This is evident in his attitude with regard to Zola's naturalism. Thus Barrès discovers the idea of the French nation or of the French race as means by which the individual can and must overcome the pessimistic determinism which the Utopia of science has taught. Paul Bourget, ten years older than Barrès—it was Bourget who facilitated young Barrès's brilliant literary career—has stressed this point: 'Taine and Renan tended, whether they liked it or not, towards a total determinism.' Barrès's traditionalism escaped from this danger: 'The conviction', writes Bourget in a revealing article on Barrès which he wrote in 1923, 'that the true culture of the self is growth, that the individual force gathers strength by incorporation in a whole, that our personal activity should, to be complete, immerse itself in a collective organism. . . . *Man finds his true self when he consents to be only a moment of his fatherland (patrie) and his race.*' (Our italics.) This indeed is the essence of Maurice Barrès's political philosophy. What we have to do now is to amplify '*la leçon de Barrès*'—this is the title of Paul Bourget's essay—by his attitude during the Boulanger and the Dreyfus Affairs.

The second volume of Barrès's novel, *Roman de l'énergie nationale: L'appel au soldat*, published in 1900, gives an historical account of the Boulanger episode. General Boulanger was Minister of War in Freycinet's radical cabinet on the recommendation of Clemenceau. Already on the 4th of March 1886 he had pronounced in the Chamber that the soldiers sent to intervene in a miners' strike at Decazeville would share their bread with the workers and their families. This gesture of a 'social' General makes a deep impression on French public opinion. During the Schnaebèle incident—a French agent who was arrested by German frontier patrols on French soil as the French maintained—Boulanger prepares the mobilization of the French army. The incident is closed by the release of Schnaebèle, but Boulanger has now become 'le général Revanche'. Yet the cabinet of which he is a member is overthrown. Now Boulanger's person becomes the rallying point for papers of

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the Left, like *L'Intransigeant*; Bonapartists and monarchists form a significant combination between Left radicalism and patriotism. His popularity becomes organized. In Paris alone a list of 38,000 names backs him. The new Prime Minister sends the popular general into the desert. He becomes commander of the 13th Army Corps in Clermont. But Boulanger maintains contact with his Parisian sympathizers and puts his candidature before five constituencies. The Government orders now his retirement from the army. Thus he becomes eligible.

His programme was simple and by its very simplicity able to give a platform to what very aptly has been called the 'syndicat des mécontents'; he stood for 'Dissolution, Constituante, Révision'. On April 8th he was elected as a member of the Chamber for Dordogne, in Paris, on January 27th by 244,149 votes against the united Republicans, and a Socialist candidate. This was significant and alarming. In the evening of the day of election his friends advised him to take over power by force. He would in all probability have succeeded. Boulanger hesitates. He thinks of the 2nd of December 1851. 'General Boulanger', writes Barrès in his *Appel du Soldat*, 'lacks belief in Boulangism, he has no belief to replace the evangile of parliamentarism.' Barrès himself was a Boulangist and elected as member of the Chamber in 1889. Yet in the sphere of party politics the general was easily defeated. The Government invoked the High Court of the Senate against Boulanger who then fled to Brussels. A few months later he shot himself. The Boulanger crisis was closed. The crisis revealed to Barrès the necessity of formulating a programme: *Être clairvoyant et fièvreux* was Barrès's formula. The Boulanger episode proved only to be fièvreux.

In 1894 a Jewish officer of the French General Staff, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, was court-martialled on the charge of having betrayed French military secrets to Germany. The *L'bre Parole*, an anti-semitic newspaper, edited by M. Drumont, the author of the book, *La France Juive*, was first in giving the news. A narrow circle of his friends tried to challenge the verdict of the military court, firmly believing in Dreyfus' innocence. In 1896 Colonel Picquart became head of the French intelligence. He re-examined the case and came to the conclusion that a letter on which the judges had based their verdict was written by a Major Esterhazy and not as previously assumed by Dreyfus. Picquart suggested the

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reopening of the case, but he was sent on service to the Colonies and replaced by Colonel Henry.

The French press got hold of the story and the Dreyfus affair began. Since the *coup d'état* of 1851 no event in French history had a deeper effect on the country. France was divided into two parties —*dreyfusard* and *anti-dreyfusard*. The split went through families, friendships, and through political parties proper. 'The Dreyfus affair', writes Bodley with unsurpassable brevity, 'was utilized by the reactionaries against the Republic, by the clericals against the non-Catholics, by the anti-Clericals against the Church, by the military party against the parliamentarians, and by the revolutionary socialists against the army.' In fact, the Dreyfus affair was a revolution. What was Barrès' attitude towards the affair? There can scarcely be any doubt. Dreyfus is a symbol. 'Political intriguers have picked up this little Jew from the dust to use him as a weapon,' he wrote. In the interest of the French nation one should have suppressed the entire affair. Why does Zola stand for Dreyfus? He is not a Frenchman, proclaims Barrès. 'Émile Zola thinks quite naturally as an uprooted Venetian.'

In July 1899 Barrès follows the hearings of the revision of the case at Rennes. Dreyfus is a *déraciné*. An Alsatian Jew. 'That he is capable of treason, I conclude from his race.' On the 9th of September 1899 the Court of Appeal decrees Dreyfus again to be guilty. 'With unmeasurable joy', writes Barrès, 'we register the victory of Rennes.' The affair has saved the nation. It has led Frenchmen out of a deadly indolence.

In 1900 Charles Maurras says of Barrès that he was 'the first organizer of the nationalist doctrine'. Indeed Barrès's book, *Scènes et doctrines du Nationalisme* (1902) seems to prove this. It was Maurras who formed Barrès's nationalism into his *nationalisme intégral*. Maurras's book, *Enquête sur la Monarchie*, published in 1901, formulated the programme of a Royalist nationalism. (See further below.) In 1899 Henri Vaugeois founded the *Action Française*. In this paper, tolerated by the Republic, the *nationalisme intégral* was propagated, the propaganda by deeds was done by the *Camelots du Roi*.

Yet Barrès was not a royalist. 'Nationalism', he writes in his *Scènes*, 'must not simply be a political expression. It is a discipline, a reflective method to hold us to all that which is truly eternal and

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which must develop continually in our country.' What is the rôle of the individual in this conception of nationalism? Nationalism is a racial determinism. 'Nationalism is the acceptance of a determinism.' Consequently, Barrès must re-define the function of reason and thought, in order to differentiate *his* determinism from that of Renan and Taine. Thus he proceeds to formulate a philosophy of irrationalism. 'Intelligence,' we read in the *Scènes*, 'what a small thing on the surface of ourselves! Certain Germans do not say "I think," but "it thinks within me"; we are, at bottom, affective beings.' Barrès's nationalism seeks *la France éternelle* which perseveres through all historic stages: Monarchy and Revolution, Consulate and Empire, the France of 1830, the Revolution of 1848—all these stages are fruits from the same tree. The realities on which Barrès founds nationalism are *la terre et les morts*. What is the French nation? 'A supreme pulpit, a cemetery and genii make the essentials of the *patrie*: a nation is a territory where men possess common memories, common habits, a hereditary ideal—a nation is the common possession of an ancient cemetery, and the will to continue to make valid this undivided heritage.' Nationalism is the integration of the total forces of the French soul. Catholicism and *esprit libre* are both manifestations of the French spirit, he even now attempts to reconcile the antagonism between *dreyfusard* and *anti-dreyfusard* in the interest of the common higher ideal: the nation.

Certain practical conclusions are obvious. Barrès is an anti-parliamentarian: 'We are clearly and resolutely in revolt and despise the parliamentary régime.' He is likewise a militarist: 'We are here, I hope, all in agreement in admitting the morality and legitimacy of the iron method.' This militarism does not prevent Barrès from propagating his ideas amongst the French workers. In a speech before socialist workers at Bordeaux he said in 1895: 'Families of individuals form the communes; families of communes, there is the region; families of regions, there is the nation; a family of nations, comrades, there is the federal humanity to which our French fatherland is tending by the impulsion of 1789.' The historic centralization of the French State has barred the development of local and decentralized groupings. It seems that Barrès while rejecting the royalism of Maurras and Bonapartism, stood for a Caesarist, plebiscitary Republic if we interpret his programme which he submitted to his electors in Nancy rightly: 'Revision of

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the Constitution has for its aim the giving of universal suffrage in its full sovereignty, particularly by the municipal referendum.'

Charles Maurras, the theorist of the *Action Française* is a *provençal*. His father was a tax-official; his mother, an ardent Catholic, in contrast to his father, sent the boy to the *Collège* of Aix which was directed by priests. Already in college Maurras lost his belief. Neither philosophy, nor art can replace his loss. 'God eliminated', he writes, 'only the intellectual, moral and political needs survived, which are natural to all civilized men and to which the Catholic idea has for a long time corresponded fully.' A programme announces itself here the promise of which Maurras attempted to fulfil.

There exists an order in history and human life which has to be laid bare. It is the task of an *élite* to teach the masses this order. History is the experience (*expérience*) of this order. But history is full of contingency. Man must take his historic opportunity whenever there is a chance of success. 'The piety of the Ancients', he writes in his book *Anthinéa*, the result of a visit to Greece in 1896, 'was more perfect because it rested on a less fragile foundation. It took to heart the numerous secrets which enrich our labour. It conceived that our part in the merit of our victories depended on the anonymous favour of circumstances, or if you prefer it on a mysterious grace.' If the masses are passive, all depends on realizing the idea of order to convince a general of the doctrine in order that he imposes the *coup d'état* from above.

The concrete order of Western civilization is to be found in the classic period of Greek antiquity, in Rome as the bearer of hellenistic tradition, and finally in France. In his book on Greece Maurras already confesses his hatred of democracy: 'To be a nationalist and to will democracy, is to waste the strength of France and at the same time to save it, which is, I believe, impossible.'

The order which Maurras seeks has to be found in the realm of politics. *Politique d'abord* became his formula. The Dreyfus affair gave him the opportunity to become a political pamphletist of the first order. The *dreyfusards* are a combination of four estates (*états*) within France: the Jews, the freemasons, the Protestants, and the naturalized foreigners;<sup>1</sup> they represent Republican France.

<sup>1</sup> Or perhaps more adequately, the *metoikoi*. With regard to their function in the Athenian State, see M. L. W. Laistner, *A Survey of Ancient History*, New York, 1929, p. 284.

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He writes a vehement glorification of Colonel Henry, the successor of Picquart as head of French Intelligence, who, as we remember, committed suicide after confessing to having forged 'new proofs' to condemn the unhappy Dreyfus. Maurras, very revealingly, states the case of a State morale as different from the laws of private morale. He writes: 'Amongst his improvised judges, some sincere nitwits thought, as good bailiffs, that the legality and morals of private life regulate all things—not knowing that there exist particular and unwritten laws, a sphere of morality higher, more rigorous and more extensive for human consciences which are charged with certain general obligations.' (Our italics.) Or even more explicit and less theoretical. 'The great fault, but the *only* fault of Lieutenant-Colonel Henry. . . . Henry let himself be found out. The irregularity, I will not say the crime, has one excuse in success. It must succeed. It ought to succeed.'

Nor are these sentences merely an expression of Maurras's youthful political passion. In his book, *Mes idées politiques*—he was sixty when he published it—he is maintaining the same theory in a more generalized and theoretical form: 'Politics is not morality. The science and art of conducting the State is not the science and art of guiding men. Where men in general may perhaps be satisfied, the particular State may be ruined.' Maurras does not hesitate in implementing this thesis more fully when he writes: 'The order of politics and the order of conscience are distinct. Human conscience pursues spiritual ends and seeks the individual salvation. Politics which adhere to the temporal are interested in the prosperous life of communities. They determine the general conditions of the public good in the natural groups which form the human race. They arise like these groups from a collection of national laws. Given then these laws, which they try to discern and formulate with all the neatness of science, they trace and enlighten the conduct of politicians rather as physiology, pathology, and therapeutics inspire and direct the conduct of doctors.' Thus Maurras completely separates the sphere of individual ethics from the ethics of the State or of politics. Once this separation is accepted, the *raison d'état* becomes necessarily arbitrary. It is, therefore, hardly surprising to find Maurras after June 1940 amongst the chief instigators of a policy of collaboration with the enemy of France. 'The reason of a State placed beyond parties is to be inspired by superior

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necessities of the nation,' we read further in *Mes idées politiques*. The idea of the nation, once torn from its individual root, easily becomes a cloak to cover any abuse.

Maurras was influenced by Comte's positivism, but he only accepted the anti-individualistic tendency of his thought. The 'naturalist Summa' of his own time he sees exemplified in Sainte-Beuve's '*empirisme organisateur*'. 'The work, the name, the bulk of this great man's ideas and their political consequences,' he writes of Sainte-Beuve, 'not forgetting his immense natural grasp, would make the best platform in the world for the day of general reconciliation.'

Maurras's praising appreciation of Sainte-Beuve is by no means accidental. The spiritual kinship between both men is profound and deserves some elucidation, perhaps not so much with regard to Sainte-Beuve (1804-69) whose life and work would have to receive their full attention in a history of French literary criticism; yet even in our context Sainte-Beuve's influence is important in as far as he illustrates how inseparable in the history of French political and social thought are the fields of literary criticism and political ideas in a more specialized sense.

Towards the end of the reign of Louis Philippe, Sainte-Beuve has himself summarized the main stages of his spiritual development. He wrote: 'I am the most broken and mistaken spirit: From these metamorphoses I began fresh, and influenced by the most advanced century, the eighteenth, with Tracy, Daunou, Lamarck, and Physiology; that is my true depth. From thence I pass by the *Doctrinaires* and the school of psychology of the *Globe*, but without adhering to them, making my own reservations. From this I pass to poetical romanticism and by the world of Victor Hugo. I crossed, travelled, or rather by-passed the Saint-Simonists and almost at the same time the world of Lamennais. . . . In 1887 in Lausanne I knocked into Calvinism. . . .' In Lausanne Sainte-Beuve gave a series of lectures on the history of Port-Royal out of which he formed his voluminous *Histoire de Port-Royal* which he published between 1840 and 1860, undoubtedly one of the greatest studies in history the French mind has ever produced. 'In all these works', continues Sainte-Beuve in his confession, 'I never separated my will from my judgement. I never let my belief interfere, but I understood people so well that I gave the greatest hopes to the sincere people who wished to convert me and counted me already of them. My curiosity,

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my desire to see everything at close quarters, my extreme pleasure at finding the relative truth of each thing and organization drew me to the series of experiences which have for me been a long course of moral physiology.' Sainte-Beuve's 'physiology of morals' seems indeed to have set an example to Maurras's separation of private ethics from the ethics of politics. If one scrutinizes Sainte-Beuve's many volumes of *Lundis* and *Nouveaux Lundis* which he began to write from 1861 onwards, thus performing the task of the official critic of the Second Empire, it is not difficult to see that he rallied himself to the Empire because his conceptions of 'order and social morality' were deeply akin to Louis Napoléon's dictatorship. Sainte-Beuve has little belief in the French people whose wisdom he distrusts. Moreover, he abhors French socialism and he sees in Louis Napoléon the 'saviour' and 'hero' in presence of the '*sauvagerie menaçante*'. He also supports Catholic clericalism, not because he was a convinced Catholic himself, but rather because he appreciates its moral and social usefulness. 'One must stop somewhere, one must have a principle, I would even say some prejudice in life: discipline, subordination, religion, *patrie*; nothing is superfluous; and out of all this one must keep something as a guarantee against oneself.' It is true there is a manifest difference between Maurras and Sainte-Beuve. The latter did not pretend to have a system. He left it to his pupil to prepare the ideology of Vichy.

Maurras' monarchism is not founded on a providential religious metaphysics as that of Joseph de Maistre or de Bonald. In his book, *Mes Idées politiques*, published in 1937, the concluding passage is dedicated to the king: 'Corruptible as man himself, the King has an immediate advantage as King, in not being influenced by anything which does not affect the immediate issue, his concern is naturally to be detached from all interests which worry all those below him. His concern is to make himself independent of these.' The King is according to Maurras the symbol of the *nationalisme intégral*.

Maurras's royalist fascism presupposes a most violent criticism of the French Revolution. 'Our revolution has destroyed monarchical authority only to establish an administrative authority far more vexatious. It has destroyed the *Ordres* to establish the classes who have less and less to do with each other, and carry on a declared war. From a well-perfected type the liberalism of 1789 made us descend to an elementary type. Will anarchy make us descend

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further still?' These sentences are typical for Maurras's historical method. He is far away from showing or perhaps even understanding how in the course of the historic process *new* classes arise. He simply decrees that the Revolution 'establishes' classes, he does not inquire into the complex and anonymous laws which determine them. 'France', Maurras continues his argument in this context, 'has been put by the Revolution in a condition far from individual democracy. All the national organizations have been destroyed. The individuals without ties have become dust. But foreign organizations have not ceased to grow and take root in the French Society because their inner discipline held and strengthened them at the expense of our decay. The democratic decline which made of the State a providence, of the citizen an administrator and *pensionné*, is their next powerful instrument of propaganda and conquest.' Consequently, for the sake of France, such a régime must be destroyed.

In his pamphlet, *Si le coup de force est possible*, published in 1909, he gives a detailed analysis of how the overthrow of the hated parliamentarian-democratic régime ought to proceed. More important than financial manœuvres is 'the presence and the threat of a vigilant band of conspirators'. Before this band of conspirators comes into action, clergy and army must be prepared by propaganda. With the help of, preferably, a general, the *coup d'état* is bound to succeed. It seems that the fate of the Third Republic of June 1940 was already foreshadowed as early as 1909.

The agnostic Maurras professed a profound appreciation of Catholicism. He has been called a believer in Catholicism without a God. Indeed he regards Catholicism as a representative of the universal order of mankind, Catholicism is his ally against the enemies of civilization proper. The Maurrasism of the *Action Française* has found before and after the first world war great support among French catholics. The strong anti-clerical tendency of the Third Republic, particularly during and after the period of the Dreyfus affair, offers perhaps sufficient reasons for such an attitude. It was a Jesuit, Father Descocq, who wrote in defence of Maurras: 'Without prejudicing our further criticisms in advance, we simply conclude that Mr. Maurras's general political principles, to the extent that they contradict the dogmas of 1789 and the revolutionary clouds, not only do not damage either natural laws or the doctrine of the Church, but come back to the great trend of eternal philosophy

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which should be dear to all Christians.' Father Descocqs enumerates the 'truths' which Maurras and the *Action Française* present: 'To affirm the dependence of the individual, to proclaim the necessity for authority, to restrain liberty: these are certain and beneficial truths which the unbelieving Maurras will have had the great merit to recall to the public, and which a Catholic, whatever he thinks of the Monarchist movement aroused by the *Action Française* should be grateful to him for propagandizing and popularizing.' But this witness of catholic opinion on Maurras can by no means be regarded as the last word of the Catholic Church with regard to the doctrines of Charles Maurras. Since 1924 with the recognition from the side of the Church of the so-called *Associations diocésaines* the new *ralliement* between Catholicism and the Third Republic implied that French Catholicism could collaborate with the State in social and political affairs. It was, therefore, only a logical step that during 1926 and 1927 the Holy See put five books by Maurras and the paper *Action Française* on the index.

Jacques Maritain in an admirable pamphlet, *Une opinion sur Charles Maurras et le devoir des Catholiques* (Paris, 1926), has criticized Maurras' political philosophy, a criticism implicit in the papal verdict which we have just mentioned. 'The political ideas of Maurras', we read, 'are not the result of an ethic, they do not constitute, properly speaking, a philosophy of the city state, a doctrine of social life bound up with a definite philosophy.' In his detailed analysis of Maurras's political ideas Maritain proceeds to show the true meaning of the term democracy: 'The social democracy recommended by the Popes . . . and which is nothing but an eagerness to give the working class, more oppressed than ever in the modern world, humane conditions of life necessary not only in all charity, but firstly for the sake of justice.' Moreover, Maritain, trained in Aristotle and Thomas, has no difficulty in proving that 'political democracy' (*πολιτεία*) is fundamentally different from democratism: 'Democratism, or democracy in the sense Rousseau used it, let us call it the religious myth of the democratic régime, which is something quite different from the legitimate democratic régime.' Maritain is aware that this myth of democratism has polluted political democracy: 'Intelligent effort must operate against the discriminations of history, based on a practical readjustment which can only be successful if it is total.'

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This criticism of Maurras's political philosophy is all the more important because Jacques Maritain was himself a 'Maurrassien' before 1926. It is not difficult to understand the links between the agnostic Maurras and French neo-Thomism. Indeed Maritain himself in his book *Primaute du Spirituel*<sup>1</sup> (Paris, 1927) indicates very clearly what he regards as the achievements of Charles Maurras' political philosophy. He writes: 'It is clear that in condemning whatever errors and aberrations she perceives in any doctrine or movement, the *Church* has no intention of condemning whatever good they may contain. [Our italics.] Whatever is right and well founded in political conceptions which, empirically and partially rediscovered by Maurras, go back to Joseph de Maistre, Bonald, Bossuet, and Saint Thomas Aquinas, remains intact. For minds which now consider as utterly exploded the old revolutionary ideology, the religion of necessary progress and every Rousseauist myth which the world took for the substance of life—the myth of natural goodness, of democratism (that is to say of the people as perpetual possessor and the sole lawful possessor of sovereignty), of the general Will and Law as the expression of numbers, of the Liberty of everyone as more important than truth and justice, of the State as the unmoral purveyor of material well-being and lay Sovereign, absolute and unlimited, of the Nation or Humanity as the Incarnation of an imminent God, etc.—there can be no question of going back, of making any concession whatever to such false and essentially obsolete ideas.' Maritain regards all this as half-truths. Only by subordinating man under God can a Christian policy be formulated. A true Christian policy must rediscover the significance of the theological civilization of the Middle Ages. In some of his later works Maritain attempted to define more fully and in a less abstract manner than in *Primaute du Spirituel* in what direction a Christian Policy ought to move. Maritain's book, *Du régime temporel et de la liberté* (1933), is of particular significance. In it the eminent Catholic philosopher outlines a new Christian political philosophy. His *humanisme intégral* can perhaps best be explained under three aspects: he conceives State and society where man is guided by a dynamism of liberty, by personalism and pluralism. 'According to

<sup>1</sup> An English edition of this work has been published in 1930; it is now available in Sheed and Ward's Unicorn Books under the title *The Things that are not Caesar's*.

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this political philosophy', we read in *Du régime temporal et de la liberté*, 'civilized society is essentially ordained, not to freedom of choice for everyone, but to a common temporal good which is the right terrestrial life of the masses, and which is not only material, but also moral; and this common good is intrinsically subordinated to the non-temporal good of the individual and to the conquest of his autonomous freedom.' The human being is fundamentally a personality, i.e. a universe of spiritual nature, who has the liberty to choose and is ultimately destined to reach an autonomous liberty. 'Neither individualist nor imperialist, one might call such a political philosophy *communal* and *personalist*.' Finally, it is perhaps now possible to understand what Maritain means by 'pluralism': 'We understand by the pluralist type of society a society in which, contrary to the strictly unitary conception which has predominated since the Renaissance, the State groups in a vital, not in a mechanical order, fundamentally different forms of legislation and heterogeneous and social structures of life.' Maritain does not, of course, suggest the reintroduction of medieval pluralism. 'To-day it must be conceived in a different way.... We think above all of an organic heterogeneity in the very structures of civilized society; we must be concerned, for example, with certain economic structures, or certain judicial or institutional structures.' Maritain does not follow Maurras in separating private ethics from the ethics of State and society; Maritain is a true Catholic. For him Catholicism is a living experience and not as for Maurras or Sainte-Beuve an aesthetic and useful means to check the 'threatening' demands of modern mass-society. In Maritain, one sees that the liberal tradition of French Catholicism is still alive—in spite of Charles Maurras.

### *(3) Socialism: Guesde, Lafargue, Jaurès, Léon Blum*

The history of French socialism from 1871 to the outbreak of the first world war is mainly the history of two leading figures: Jules Guesde (1845–1922) and Jean Jaurès (1859–1914). Both of them are the undisputed representatives of two profoundly different trends of French socialist thought. Though in 1905 both men agreed to form one socialist party in France, the fundamental difference or rather tension between *Guesdism* and *Jaurèsism* has al-

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ways existed in French socialism, right up to the outbreak of the second world war. Perhaps one might even say that Léon Blum (born 1872), who succeeded Guesde and Jaurès in the leadership of the *Parti Socialiste* during the period after the first world war, was never able to reconcile these two traditions which we now have to analyse.

Jules Guesde was born in Paris, son of a professor; he was sixteen when he matriculated. Balzac's, Michelet's, and above all Victor Hugo's books were the friends of his youth. Even as an old man he knew parts of the *Châtiments* by heart:

*Acharnez-vous sur lui, farouches,  
Et qu'il soit chassé par les mouches,  
Puisque les hommes en ont peur.*

As a journalist he passionately defended the Commune in 1871. He was sentenced to five years, but he preferred to leave France and went into exile. In Geneva he became involved in the struggles between the Bakunist and the Marxist section of the First International. In 1876 he was allowed to return to France and founded a newspaper, the *Egalité*, being by then a convinced socialist. The programme of the *Egalité* was this: 'It (*l'Egalité*) will not only be republican in its politics, and atheistic in its religion; it will be, above all, socialist. . . . We believe in the collectivist school, to which nearly all serious minds of the proletariat adhere . . . , that the natural and scientific evolution of humanity invariably leads to collective appropriation of the land and the instruments of production.' From this point of view the paper promises to study the facts of social life.

Within a few years—by 1880—Jules Guesde becomes an orthodox Marxist and it is the high priest of Marxism himself who dictates to Guesde who has visited him in London together with Lafargue, Marx's son-in-law, the programme of the *Parti Ouvrier*. Paul Lafargue (1841–1911) was a revolutionary *pur sang*. He married Marx's daughter Laura in London where he had found refuge from France after the Commune. Lafargue was the Kautsky of French socialism: the popularizer and even vulgarizer of Marx's doctrines. Georges Sorel in his *Décomposition du Marasme* was probably not exaggerating when he pronounced the following verdict on Lafargue: 'No-one has thought of believing, for example,

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that historical materialism could consist of the paradoxes, *drôleries*, and *naïvetés* which Paul Lafargue has written on the origins of law, morals, and religion. . . .’ Sorel also, quite rightly, blames Karl Kautsky for having published Lafargue’s essays in *Die Neue Zeit*: ‘Kautsky published in the official organ of Social Democracy nearly all the idiocies that Lafargue had presented as application of Marxism and *he accorded them an approbation which has done much towards making the Marxisan School appear ridiculous.*’ (Our italics.) Even in 1908, three years after the unification of the *Parti Ouvrier* with the *Parti Socialiste* at the congress of Toulouse this instrumental collaborator of Jules Guesde thought it wise to proclaim: ‘Socialists are not parliamentarians; they are, on the contrary, anti-parliamentarians who wish to overthrow the government, this régime of lies and incoherence.’ Only Lafargue’s undoubtedly sincerity for the cause of the working classes can justify his dangerous simplicity. To return to Guesde, the programme, which thus came into being in London, incidentally the first Marxist programme of a continental working-class party, does not differ much from the *Communist Manifesto*. Its principles run like this: ‘Considering that the emancipation of the productive class is that of all human beings, without distinction of sex or race; that producers would not know how to be free unless they possess the means of production (land, factories, shops, banks, credit facilities, etc.); that the only two ways in which the means of production can belong to them: (1) individually: this has never existed generally, and is being eliminated by industrial progress; (2) collectively: the proletariat and the theoretical beginnings of the system are being developed by the capitalist system itself. Considering that this collective appropriation cannot emerge except by revolutionary action on the part of the productive class—or the proletariat—organized in a separate political party: that such an organization should be carried out by all the means (*including universal suffrage*) [our italics] transformed from an instrument of duping to one of emancipation. . . .’ This programme to which Frederick Engels has also contributed was accepted by the *Parti Ouvrier*—Guesde’s Party—in 1880.

The new party easily won ground amongst the French workers. It is true, already in 1882 the so-called possibilists, under the leadership of Malon and Brousse, split from the *Parti Ouvrier*, blaming

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Guesde—not without justification—for his doctrinaire rigidity. Yet Guesde with the blessing from the two high priests of London maintains his intransigent attitude towards any kind of evolutionism. Indeed it seems that he was even more Marxist than Marx himself. He thought that the big estate owners would by necessity destroy the small peasant holdings, and therefore, force the peasants as well as the small industrialists and the *petits-bourgeois* into the arms of the French proletariat. No political myth was perhaps more fatal in the history of modern political thought—and this applies not only to France but also to other continental countries, particularly to Germany and Italy—than the conception of the automatic destruction of the 'middle classes' (better perhaps *Mittel-Schichten*).<sup>1</sup> Until 1931, 35 per cent of the working population in France was engaged in agriculture and related occupations, not to mention the so-called *petite bourgeoisie* and the small-scale industrialists. The structure of modern society cannot be interpreted by the two-sided class-antagonism which Guesde, following Marx, taught. In this early period of the history of the *Parti Ouvrier* Guesde and his friends firmly stood by an uncompromising revolutionary solution of the social problem.

Yet one cannot escape from facts in politics. Between 1892 and 1894 the *Parti Ouvrier* adopted a new agrarian programme which marks a significant change in Guesde's social theory. In French agriculture the structure of small or medium peasant freehold is dominant. Here producer and owner—thus Guesde realizes now—form a unity. The free peasant must, therefore, become an ally of the proletariat which is fighting for the collectivization of the industrial means of production. But fundamentally Guesde has not changed his political attitude as it manifested itself during the Dreyfus affair. Together with Paul Lafargue he signs a declaration in which the following sentences are characteristic: 'The proletarians have nothing to do with this battle which is not theirs. We well understand that they have their victims in it and that it is for their liberation that, appealing to the noblest sentiments, they would like to draw us into the tumult. But what could the victims be—of the adversary class—compared with the millions of victims who constitute the working class, and who, children, women, men, tortured, hungry, are unable to rely on anyone but themselves, on their

<sup>1</sup> See my essay, 'The New Middle Classes', *Dublin Review*, 1941.

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organization and their victorious struggle to save themselves? . . . It is up to them who have complained that justice has been violated with regard to one of them to come to socialism which is pursuing and is standing for the justice of all, and not for socialism to come to them, to espouse their particular quarrel. . . .' Jean Jaurès took a quite different attitude towards Dreyfus. His argument shows his dynamic and subtle spirit, so much superior to Guesde's. 'There are two parts within the capitalist and *bourgeois* legal concept,' we read in an article which Jaurès wrote against Guesde and his friends. 'There is a whole mass of laws designed to protect the fundamental evil of our society; there are laws which consecrate the privilege of capitalist property . . . we want to break these laws, by revolution if necessary . . . that a new order may arise. . . . But besides these laws of privilege and plunder . . . there are others which retain the poor progress of humanity, the modest guarantees which have been assured little by little by the sustained effort of centuries and a long series of revolutions. Now among these laws the one that prevents a man being condemned, whoever he may be, before he has had his say, is perhaps the most important. Contrary to the nationalists who want to keep the *bourgeois* legality, and all that protects capital, to empower generals with all that protects man: we revolutionary socialists want to abolish the capitalist sectional interest in the legal framework and save the interests of humanity.' Reform and Revolution are, as one sees from these sentences compatible in the political philosophy of Jaurès. The fundamental difference between Jaurès and Guesde can hardly be better illustrated.

Guesde's revolutionism did not prevent him appreciating the futility and the verbalism of international pacifism which was at this time so prevalent amongst the Continental working-class parties. Here, too, he could hardly see eye to eye with the humanitarian and noble idealism of Jaurès. Any general strike to prevent a European conflagration by war, must necessarily, so thought Guesde, lead to the defeat of that country in which the working classes are best organized. A country with a less well-disciplined proletariat—consequently on a lower level of civilization—will go to war unchecked. This, indeed, is a realistic argument which can hardly be refuted. Thus Guesde concludes logically: 'Peace and disarmament are nothing but words. They will not become realities except through revolution and the triumph of socialism in a new

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society.' Consequently, when in 1914 the war broke out, Jules Guesde became a minister of State in the cabinet of the '*Union Sacrée*'. 'When war breaks out a chain should be formed, as in the case of fire,' he said. 'Wars are the mothers of revolutions' was another dictum of his. Revolution and Reform are still not reconciled in Guesde's political thought.

In 1905 the *Parti Ouvrier* amalgamates with the *Parti Socialiste Français* which was under the leadership of Jaurès. The new party calls itself S.F.I.O., which means *Parti socialiste, section française de l'Internationale ouvrière*. The French workers themselves felt that unity of action was more important than ideological differences. Undoubtedly the latter prevailed in the subsequent history of the French socialist party, the history of which cannot be written here. The structural incompatibility between the ideas of revolution by force and reform by co-operation with non-socialist groups—perhaps inherent in Marx's political philosophy—reveals itself, particularly during the inter-war period from 1936 onwards, when Léon Blum's popular front governments came into being.

But let us return now to Jaurès. He comes from a family of the '*bourgeoisie moyenne*' in the Languedoc. Already in school his fellow-pupils admired his rhetorical brilliance. At the age of 19 he enters the *École Normale* which he leaves (in the same year as Henri Bergson, namely in 1881) to become a professor of philosophy in Albi (Tarn). Between 1883 and 1885 he teaches in Toulouse. He was 26 when he entered the French parliament as a radical. His Latin thesis, which he submitted in 1891, deals with the *Origins of German Socialism*. It is, therefore, not surprising to find the young professor already in 1893 in the socialist movement. His great work, *Histoire socialiste de la Révolution française*, which even such an austere critic as Aulard described as 'a work of truth and of scientific inspiration' gave for the first time an objective appreciation of Robespierre. His interpretation of Robespierre is unsurpassed. 'Robespierre did not take', Jaurès writes, 'all his pessimism from Jean-Jacques since he believed that democracy was applicable to the great modern States. But he said to himself that even after a total institution of democracy a good many evils would pile up. He had not an idea of socialism. He did not foresee the possibility of a new social order where all human energies would spend themselves more harmoniously.' With profound insight

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Jaurès analyses Robespierre's religion of the '*Être suprême*': 'It was very foolish to imagine that by a kind of attenuation and fading of its essential doctrines and through itself Christianity would be reduced to a natural religion.'

For eighteen hundred years the divinity of Christ has dominated the Christian conscience. 'The heart of the suffering masses was given to this kind of living, human, historic form of God, rather than to an abstract idea of a universal being, unmoving and colourless; and soon, at the least movement of reaction, and the least deception of the people, Christianity, entire and exacting, was restored without the superficial deity; suddenly the authoritative power of the Church developed once more from this hidden root.... It was to be feared that Robespierre himself, after having made certain doctrines of natural religion, almost confusing the purified form of Christian doctrine with the very condition of morality and virtue, was tempted to put the power of the State at the service of this Christian-philosophical compromise and that France was now led back to the ancient intolerance by suspect paths.' Again we have touched on the fundamental problem of the *Deux Frances*, which only in her greatest sons, to whom Jean Jaurès belongs, has been solved. His historical method though influenced by Marx, was entirely his own: 'Throughout the historic succession of types of society the thinking man aspires to a full life of thought, to the ardent communion with the unruly spirit, craving for unity with a mysterious universe.' Against Marx and Guesde he maintains that the capitalist State is *pénétrable*.

In a brilliant introductory essay to a volume, *Études socialistes*, published in 1902—incidentally this essay is addressed to Charles Péguy—Jaurès gives a full and masterly exposition of his own theories as contrasted with those of Marx and Engels. Jaurès shows how deeply Marx's mind was impressed by the revolutionary movements in France of 1789 to 1796, of 1830 to 1848, *bourgeois* movements 'in which the working class participates in order to outgrow them'. Jaurès opens his interpretation of the Marxian revolutionary doctrine by proving how Marx and Engels at the time when they wrote the *Communist Manifesto* relied on the *bourgeois* revolution which they then thought to use for their own (proletarian) ends. 'These are the tactics to which the workers are condemned when they are still in a period of insufficient preparation.' It is a

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sign of weakness, argues Jaurès, to force events artificially. Furthermore, there is a Utopian element in such an assumption.

With the greatest care Jaurès analyses then the ambiguity with which Marx and Engels use the term 'democracy' in the *Manifesto*. This ambiguity is evident and need not be illustrated here. Jaurès without hesitation states: 'A class born of democracy which instead of siding with democratic law was to prolong its dictatorship beyond the first days of the revolution would soon be no more than a band of russians encamped in a territory and abusing the resources of the country.' In reality, declares Jaurès, the legal conquest of democracy is the supreme method of the Revolution. He flatly rejects any form of Blanquism. 'To-day the determinism through which Marx, Engels, and Blanqui conceived the proletarian revolution has been eliminated. For one thing the new stronger proletariat no longer counts on the favour of the *bourgeois* revolution. . . . *It has its own organization, its own strength. It has through the syndicates and co-operatives a growing economic power, through universal suffrage and democracy a legal force that can be expanded indefinitely . . . it starts its own revolution methodically by gradual and legal conquest of the power of production and of the State.*' (Our italics.) These sentences are certainly the classical formulation of a social-democratic policy. They make no attempt to compromise with a revolutionary Utopia which Jaurès obviously regards as unrealistic.

He strengthens his theory by a glance at Engels's book on the conditions of the working class in England. How completely and deeply Engels erred when he prophesied in 1845 that the bloodiest revolution in history was imminent in England. 'A strange view of England', comments Jaurès somewhat ironically, 'a country so skilled in evolution and compromise.' Jaurès knew his friends across the Channel well.

His book *L'Armée nouvelle* (1910) is a full implementation of his fundamental idea that the *bourgeois* State is penetrable. In the hierarchy of life, he says, referring to Aristotle and Comte, the superior presupposes the inferior. 'We take as witness the fatherland in all its continuity and unity. This unity will be strengthened when the class-struggles in each country have been replaced by a social harmony and when collective property forms the foundations of the communal conscience.' From this his effort to maintain peace

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explains itself. Even on the 1st of August 1914 he raised warningly his voice in the *Avenir Socialiste*: 'Citizens . . . at the moment, threatened with murder and savagery, there is nothing left but a chance for the maintenance of peace and the salvation of civilization.' Jaurès appeals to his comrades in France, Germany, Italy, Russia to prevent the oncoming disaster. His appeal was in vain. He was murdered the very day this sentence was published.

Leon Blum was a friend of Jaurès. He shared with him the moral conception of socialism. 'Socialism', he once wrote, 'is a moral outlook, almost a religion, as much as it is a doctrinal theory.' Or somewhere else: 'It is not true that our appeal is addressed to the human animal. We appeal, not to envy, the basest of human motives, but to the instinct of justice and mercy that is the noblest of human feelings. We seek in the down-trodden slave to evoke that new morality that awakens with liberty.' Yet at the same time Blum, in an article written in 1924, maintained, that 'Karl Marx has taught us that the imperativeness of events is working for us, that the internal laws of evolution lead present-day society irrevocably towards the new model society we conceive: that the system of collective property is pre-natally founded within the capitalistic system as the child in the womb of his mother'. Thus we meet again in Blum the fundamental antagonism which our interpretation of Guesde's and Jaurès's political ideas has already shown: on the one side the conviction of the inevitable economic development towards the socialist goal which makes human action only accidental, on the other side the moral foundation of socialism which is the source of all human activity, the economic sphere included. It is doubtful whether Leon Blum achieved a synthesis of these two divergent tendencies which seem to characterize the essence of French socialism.

He was a son of a wealthy Jewish family. Before Blum entered the *École Normale* he went through the *Lycée Charlemagne* and *Henri IV*. At the *École Normale* he was made familiar with socialism by a fellow student, Louis Revelin, and by the librarian of the *École*, Lucien Herr, the friend of Pégy and Anatole France. Later on he studied Law at the Sorbonne; as early as 1895 he presented himself for election to the *Conseil d'État*. He became a member for more than twenty years.

A year later he sought and formed the friendship with Jean

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Jaurès on whose side and under whose guidance he became familiar with the French socialist movement. Whether Blum ever overcame the subtle and sublime intellectualism of his youth, which even attracted Maurice Barrès, seems doubtful.

At the outbreak of the first world war, Blum became Sembat's *chef de cabinet*, the ministerial colleague of Guesde, in the cabinet of Viviani. In 1919 he entered Parliament. As a parliamentarian he had to resign from the *Conseil d'État* and decided to become a barrister. Within a short time Blum rose to the leadership of French socialism by his brilliant intelligence as well as by his moral integrity. In 1936 he founded his first 'Popular Front' Government.

It was not inappropriate that a book of his, *La Réforme gouvernementale*, was then republished which had first appeared anonymously at the end of 1918. This study, a result of a long experience in public affairs, formulated by a legally trained mind, contains only by implication a political philosophy, it is rather a constitutional treatise. But certain points are relevant for our purpose here.

'Public opinion in France', he writes, 'has not attained that sentiment of parliamentary loyalty that is so deep-rooted with our friends across the Channel.' He would like to see—again he looks with envy to Great Britain—a shadow cabinet able to replace a defeated Government. To achieve this end, a cohesive party system is essential. A party must have a general staff out of which it can draw, when needed, its ministers. Blum shows how the radical party, though having had for years a majority in the country, failed to provide a cadre of leaders. Thus France lost confidence and the radical party declined. To-morrow, Blum prophesies, the socialist party may experience the same fate. Finally, he writes: 'The institutions of a representative government rest on a free and voluntary understanding between the majority and the government.' Jaurès' theory of permeation has borne fruit. The treatise to which we referred, proves it. But the undermining forces which finally destroyed the Third Republic—we have recorded part of their work in the preceding pages of this book—were not inclined to stick to majority rules.

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### (4) '*Doctrine Radicale*'

The radical idea in French politics is theoretically probably the least developed. Radicalism, or better radical-socialism, is an attitude rather than a rational system of political ideas. These pages cannot give an analysis of French political parties; this is the less necessary since M. André Siegfried has provided us with an admirable sociology of the French party system in his book, *Tableau des Partis en France* (Paris, 1930), from which I should like to borrow the following sentences: 'The radical-socialists are the salt of the Left, in the biblical sense, and perhaps the most typically French of all parties. The small folk of the country and the towns, above all the small towns, who are neither millionaires nor proletarians, generally correspond to what individualism there is left in the French economy: from the American point of view they express what is most old-fashioned in France. Their main idea is to defend, *as if by instinct* [our italics] everything "small" against everything "big" to ask indulgence for everything that stands against social discipline (except if there is an organization against discipline), to oppose lay-society against the clerical order: declarations of principles, according to which tactics are more interesting than reforms, and the will of the people against capitalist direction of the nation. . . . And why would there be any hurry for changing a society whose evolution tends to eliminate the radical socialist? He ought to be, or is perhaps, from the point of view of the future, the truest conservative.' One feels the eminent sociologist writes here not without a personal bias. He himself is probably a 'radical', but like de Tocqueville he is apprehensive of an inevitable future.

Since 1849, the date of the elections for the *Assemblée Constituante* of the Second Republic, as Professor Scignobos has observed, the fundamental party divisions in France have firmly established themselves. Since 1849 the pivots of French politics are: Monarchism, Republicanism, Radicalism, and Socialism, though it is true that the last Chamber of the Third Republic, elected in 1937, shows more than thirty different political groupings. Yet in the last analysis they can be reduced to these four fundamental structural principles. A history of the French political party system in relation to

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their specific political ideas has still to be written. Such a study would, in all probability, show that since and during the Dreyfus affair, French political parties became more organized, more disciplined. It is significant that the *Ligue pour la défense des Droits de l'homme et du citoyen* in which 'radicals' like Aulard, Seignobos, the philosopher Léon Brunschvicg took a leading part, was founded in the summer of 1898. It was meant to be the opposing non-parliamentarian radical organization to the nationalist *Ligue de la Patrie Française*.

The political philosophy of French radicalism must be sought in the speeches of the great radical leaders of the Third Republic or in many writings of men like Anatole France or more recently like Alain. From Gambetta and Clemenceau to Herriot and Daladier the radical 'principles' have been stated again and again. Surely in varying formulas, but fundamentally perhaps unaltered. 'France', Julien Benda once remarked, 'is the victory of the abstract over the concrete.' Perhaps the substance of the radical political philosophy cannot be more genuinely expressed.

Albert Thibaudet in his masterly study, *La République des Professeurs* (Paris, 1927), has perhaps given us the most complete critical analysis of the radical political philosophy which anyone who wants to understand French politics ought not to fail to read. France is radical, explains Thibaudet, because she votes every four years for radical ideas. The radical party is a party of ideas, not of interests. 'This means', we read in *La République des Professeurs*, 'that it (the radical socialist party) is unsuited to voicing general interests, and more precisely that the French economy is to the Right. A Radical Congress has never elaborated an economic programme which belonged to radicals. . . . The whole economic programme consists in making small things big: under a mystical halo an adjective, a small adjective: the small farmer, the small trader, the small property owner, the small consumer. . . .' A country-wide organization of radical (and socialist) *cadres* or perhaps better of election-committees formed the link between the French electorate and the elected. It is significant that the number of people who composed these *comités* has been compared with the 200,000 *censitaires* of 1848. The individual French elector largely adhered to his particular interpretation of the principles of 1789, the Revolution which according to Herriot's symptomatic statement 'was indi-

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vidualistic'.<sup>1</sup> Until 1905, when the separation from State and Church became effective, the radical party was nourished by the *idée laïque* against the *idée catholique*. Since 1924, when Édouard Herriot became Prime Minister, it stood for the League of Nations and for the *École unique*, but both these ideas were not strong enough to survive the challenge by fascist totalitarianism.

When Gambetta in 1875 buried his friend Edgar Quinet, he confessed to adhering to the principles of 1789 and 1848. 'Perhaps these ancestors', he said, 'were more obsessed by the ideals of those principles and accustomed to face the purity of the Good and the Beautiful. They have paid with their work and their sufferings for not facing the pitiable and vulgar details of day-to-day politics.' This, maintains Gambetta, is the lot of democracy in 1875.

'Alain' (a pseudonym of E. Chartier, professor of philosophy at the *Lycée Henry IV*, Paris) has re-stated the dynamic of the political philosophy of radicalism. 'The principle of radicalism', he says, 'is the government of the people by the people as really, as directly as possible, crushing all tyrannies, all undue pressures, all vested interests, having for its sole ideal law conformity to the opinion of the greatest number.' The power of democracy is the power to check the rulers in the interest of the ruled; 'to be a radical', Alain defines unmistakably, 'is to accept without any restriction the principles that universal suffrage must have all power and all ultimate control and checking authority. To be something else than a radical, whatever the political label may be, is to allow the *élite* to predominate over numbers, and to give a blank cheque to the wealthiest or to the bravest or to the wisest: so that any coalition against the republic comprises rich men, officers, and bureaucrats.' Against socialism, Alain maintains that it is not incompatible with unchecked authority, but otherwise 'the enemies of radicalism and socialism are now the same'.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, with regard to all important problems they should adopt the same attitude.

Alain feels himself a son of Voltaire though there is a touch of mourning and scepticism in his writings. Perhaps very rightly so. 'If this order which has made us directors, colonels, or academi-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Herriot, *The Wellsprings of Liberty*, London, 1939, p. 116. This book is a classical example of an interpretation of the Revolution from the view-point of the radical-socialist party.

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cians appears to us to be an admirable and divine order, we must worship this Egyptian order and also pure force. That is to dislocate the spirit. *On the contrary, the free spirit is against injustice, for the light suffices.*’ (Our italics.) Thus wrote Alain in 1935. Did he not see that the twilight had already begun?

#### *(5) Charles Péguy: Example and Message*

Before the second world war Péguy’s books were the most widely read amongst young Frenchmen. Even after June 1940, there is evidence which seems to indicate that the reading of the works of Péguy nourishes the hope of a French revival. Indeed, this great French moralist is like *Jeanne d’Arc*, a living symbol of the eternal spirit and message of France.

Born in Orléans in 1873, son of a French family who had represented for generations the peasant and artisan tradition of the French soil, Charles Péguy lived in the French provincial atmosphere which, in its industrious, modest, and pious structure, had not much changed since the days of Jeanne. His father died very early; so Charles lived under the care of his mother, who earned her living as a ‘*rempailleuse*’, and his grandmother. To his grandmother who was mainly in charge of the boy, and who looked after the *ménage*, he dedicated the following words: ‘*à la mémoire de ma grand’mère, paysanne, qui ne savait pas lire, et qui la première m’enseigna le langage français*’. Péguy became one of the great masters of modern French prose. From his mother he learned a profound respect for the primary unity of family life and the grandeur of a poverty which is full of simple happiness. The example of his mother was for Péguy the symbol of his moral socialism.

*Et ensemble ils faisaient un si bon ménage,*

*Le garçon et la mère.*

*Ils avaient été si heureux dans ce temps-là,*

*La mère et le garçon.*

Young Péguy was an exceptional pupil. The school which he attended was secular: the teaching of Christ was given to the boys only when they were taught the meaning of the Catholic catechism. School and Church, but also Republic and Church, were the *deux puretés* of his childhood. From the primary school Charles was trans-

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ferred to the *École primaire supérieure*, and from here to the *Lycée*. Yet he did not become a parvenu. He did not betray the *faubourg* of Orléans, nor his mother the *rempailleuse*. His *bourgeois* fellow-pupils were proud to be his friends. They accompanied Péguy when he delivered the chairs made by his mother's hands to her customers.

In those years—around 1885—he lost his faith in the Catholic Church. He became a heretic, a Catholic protestant, which he remained to the end of his life. French scepticism proved to be stronger than the hierarchical narrowness of an ecclesiastical order.

In autumn 1892 he leaves his native town of Orléans and enters the *Lycée Lakanal*. A year later he was allowed to present himself for election to the *École Normale*, the spiritual home of the French intelligentsia. But first he decides to serve as a soldier. Péguy was a passionate and brilliant soldier. Perhaps the strict discipline of the French army served as a kind of counter-balance in an atomized society. It was not until 1894 that he entered the *École Normale*.

In Paris he discovered misery—*la misère collective*. He sought to make this misery disappear by a kind of scientific socialism, the methods of which he derived mainly from Proudhon and Georges Sorel, hardly from Karl Marx. Had not the Catholic Church of the ancient world ignored slavery? In the same way, so Péguy thought, modern Catholicism ignores the misery of the masses herded together in the cities. His first social essay, written in 1896, was a work entitled *La Cité Harmonieuse*. In it he drew a picture of his new world. It was not an egalitarian community which he conceived. His new man was a differentiated personality, rather the purified man of the ancient world: '*l'homme éternel*'.

In December 1896 he suddenly decided to leave the *École Normale*. He returned to Orléans and wrote his first tragedy of the life of *Jeanne d'Arc*, the heroine of his youth and of his mature years. He returned to the *École* after he had finished his drama in 1897, but only for a short time. He married the sister of a friend, and with his wife's money he founded a socialist publishing house, which, like his later published review, *Les Cahiers de la Quinzaine*, was not a financial success. Péguy was always near bankruptcy. An uncompromising moralism did not pay in France during the period of the Dreyfus affair.

Péguy was a *dreyfusard* from the first hour. For him one single

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crime against an individual would destroy the social contract. He disagreed with political socialism which joined the *dreyfusards* because it took the affair as an example of collective injustice. Péguy was also violently opposed to the anti-semitic Maurice Barrès, who taught, as we have seen, the dangerous doctrine that the fate of one individual was not worth endangering the country as a whole. Péguy appealed to the eternal law of justice and to the traditional Western law of nature.

This moral sense of *l'esprit examen* differentiates Péguy not only from Guesde, the leader of French political socialism, but also from Barrès' irrationalism. Pupil and friend of Henri Bergson, Péguy maintained that reason and Bergson's dynamic philosophy of life are essentially compatible. 'It was pretended', he writes, 'that the quarrel with intellectualism was one with reason, wisdom, logic, and intelligence. Bergsonism was principally an effort to lead reason to the embrace of reality.'

Against the background of this fundamental conviction Péguy thought he was justified in attacking the sterile rationalism of the Sorbonne, and in debunking the doctrines of Renan and Taine. Against the latter's historical science he maintained that the process of historical fact-finding never comes to an end; and the former's belief in the inevitable progress of science he makes responsible for the loss of values, which to him seems to be characteristic of his age. He was not wrong.

*Et vous, hommes, allez à l'école de la vie,  
Allez apprendre  
A désapprendre.*

Or, as he writes somewhere else: 'We are the last, the very last. After us begins the world of those who no longer believe in anything, and who make a glory and self-elevation of it.'

It was Bergson's philosophy which made Péguy rediscover his religious faith. Bergsonism had made him realize the depths of human nature which a so-called scientific rationalism only distorts. He disliked the term conversion. He preferred to call it *approfondissement*. 'I have regained faith . . . I am a catholic', Péguy confesses to a friend in 1908. This, of course, did not mean his reconciliation with the Church as an institution.

His second *Jeanne d'Arc*, which he now writes, is the result of his

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new spiritual experience. The heroine of his youth becomes a saint. Sword and cross find themselves together to fight for justice and liberty.

During and after 1905 Péguy was very much alive to the dangers of a German aggressive war. 'We free people,' he writes, 'liberal people, France, Great Britain, Italy, even America are constrained under the brutality of the German menace, in the impossibility of doing nothing, absolutely nothing of what our forefathers would have done.' His second *Jeanne d'Arc* became the symbol of a France, who, while fighting for her own Christian liberty, had at the same time saved the Christian liberty of the world. Here Péguy's nationalism has its roots. Pacifism, anti-militarism, internationalism, were treason in Péguy's eyes. Like his *Jeanne* he was always prepared to die for his cause. Like his saint, Péguy was a soldier.

Republicanism and christianism appeared to him to be compatible. He sneered at the *Action Française*. Their supporters were only disguised Jacobins; not an atom of the spirit of the *Ancien Régime* was to be found amongst them. Though Péguy wrote most violently against the French Revolution of 1789, he never wanted to see this 'enormous historic event' attacked beyond its true errors. 'As long as one does not dabble in politics', he thinks, it is easy to be a good Christian and a good republican.

*La mystique républicaine*, for which Péguy stood, is something essentially different from the Republicanism of most of his contemporaries. A correspondent asked Péguy to define the meaning of *la mystique républicaine*. He answered him in the *Cahiers*: 'You, Sir, asked me to define by logical reason what is mysticism and what is politics, *qui sic mysticum, et quid politicum*, republican mysticism is when one died for the Republic, republican politics is when one lives at the moment. You understand, don't you?' In Péguy's separation from Jaurès the fundamental antagonism between these two kinds of republicanism defines itself even more clearly. Péguy and Jaurès have been intimate friends. But Jaurès has surrendered to Combes' republicanism. 'A long time has elapsed', we read in the *Cahiers de la Quinzaine*, where Péguy gives a moving and final account of his relationship with the great socialist tribune, 'since I saw Jaurès, who had been re-elected deputy. His capitulation to the demagogery of Comte... had completed a separation of which the beginning becomes indistinct in our long-standing relations.' Péguy

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has just paid a visit to Jaurès who is preparing the publication of his paper, *l'Humanité*. The two friends have no longer anything to say to each other. 'For the last time he (Jaurès) left the free, honest life, the life of the simple citizen. For the last time and irrevocably he took a plunge into politics.'

In 1910 Péguy defends the Republican elections; their very existence is the great landmark between the *ancien régime* and the Revolution. 'You forget,' he writes, 'you do not realize that there has been a republican *mystique* and to forget or misunderstand that, does not mean it does not exist. *Men have died for liberty just as they have died for faith.* [Our italics.] The elections to-day appear to you a grotesque formality, a complete lie in every way but men without number have lived heroes, martyrs, and I would say saints—and when I say saints I perhaps know what I mean—men without number have lived heroically, saintly, men have suffered, men are dead, a whole people have lived so that the last imbecile to-day has the right to complete this cheating formality.' The degradation of the *mystique* into *politique* is, so teaches Péguy, a general law in our modern industrial societies. 'Have there not been, are there not other degradations? All begins in the spirit (*en mystique*) and ends in politics. All begins by the spirit (*la mystique*), by a spirit (*une mystique*), by its (own) spirit (*mystique*) and ends in politics. The important question is not that something is important or interesting, but the interest and the question is that such a system of politics does not supersede this one or that, and to know which one will carry away, as it were, all politics. The interest, the question, the essential, is in every order, in every system. The spirit (*la mystique*) must not be devoured by politics, to which it has given birth.' Péguy's conception of a *mystique politique* is perhaps also evident in the final shape which he has given to his myth of Jeanne d'Arc. 'She was of the people, a Christian and a saint,' he writes with unsurpassable simplicity in an essay, published in 1911. 'She accomplished a divine task by simple human means. Jeanne d'Arc, precisely because she exercised her saintliness in the purely human manner, precisely because she lived entirely vulnerable militarily, to disease, wounds, capture, death, and to defeat. Fully exposed like an ancient hero to all adventure of war, she belongs to the race of heroes as she belongs to the race of saints.' Péguy in his exemplary humility would never have accepted this formula as epitaph

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to his own life. In his posthumous writings he has said of himself: '... he knows that he has regained the being he is, and that he has regained strength to be the being that he is; a good Frenchman of the ordinary kind, and towards God faithful and a fisher of men'. Thus Péguy has exemplified a synthesis of French Republicanism and Christianity.

Yet Péguy never made his peace with the Catholic Church. His moral socialism forced him to fight the Church as a bastion of conservatism and hypocrisy. He could not accept Thomism as *his* philosophy, like the friend of his early years, Jacques Maritain. 'Why', he asks, 'must you have a metaphysical philosophy and impose it? Why must you have any system and impose it?' Had he lived long enough he would perhaps have realized that the example of his life—for Péguy's life was essentially a living myth of French tradition and perhaps more significant than his writings—contributed to a great extent to the revitalizing of French Catholicism.

He fell on the 5th of September 1914, near the Marne. It has been reported that the statue of Péguy which his native town erected in his memory, has been shot in the identical spot where a German bullet pierced his head in 1914. This happened in June 1940. Thus Péguy has died a second time. But perhaps this time not in vain.

### *(6) Georges Sorel: Beyond Marxism*

Hardly any political philosopher of the twentieth century has roused so many misinterpretations as Georges Sorel. Sorel has been claimed for the Soviet theory of the State as well as for the Fascist political philosophy. Indeed, the complicated and very often rather baroque character of his works explains to some extent those misinterpretations. The following remarks attempt to give an unbiased outline of the political ideas of this great French thinker who is so difficult to interpret.

Georges Sorel was born in Cherbourg in 1847. After he had matriculated in the same town—his spirit has always preserved the influence of Normandy—he attends the *École polytechnique* in Paris and becomes an engineer. For two and a half decades of his life Sorel builds French bridges and roads; having reached the age of 45, he asks to be put on the retired list, not before he had received the cross of the legion of honour. Unfortunately, we do

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not know much about his life until this date. A future biographer of Georges Sorel will have to explore this earlier phase of his career.

Only as a mature man he begins with his literary work which breaks out of him like a volcano: before he died in 1922—the year of Mussolini's march on Rome—Georges Sorel wrote seventeen books, lengthy introductions to eight books by others, and published numerous articles and essays in forty-one reviews. Until today nobody has written a satisfactory monograph of Sorel's formidable work which is so difficult to understand as a unity.

Since 1897 Sorel lived in a small house at Boulogne-sur-Seine—in intimate community with his nephew and niece. His wife, to whom he had been deeply devoted, had died childless. She had been his most faithful comrade. To her memory he dedicated later on the following moving words: 'Happy is the man who has met a devoted, energetic, and proud woman who never allows his soul to be contented, who knows how to recall the obligations of his task and who occasionally reveals to him even his own genius.' Sorel's deep moralism—so reminiscent of Proudhon—has its roots in his marriage. The morally purifying effect of a good marriage—this he believed and taught through all phases of his life. Here he had discovered the bulwark against the tendency of the levelling down of moral values by the decadent sensualism of his age.

Without this moralism and without his belief in the proletariat which is fundamentally connected with this moralism, it would hardly be possible to understand the various stages of Sorel's spiritual and political development. His first writings, which he published in 1889, showed a conservative attitude; in 1893 he becomes a defender of orthodox Marxism accepting the perspective of the revolutionary cataclysm; in 1906 he publishes his famous book, *Réflexions sur la violence*, with which he becomes the intellectual leader of French revolutionary syndicalism. He attacks *political* socialism and *bourgeoisie* likewise; in 1911 Sorel comes near to the *Action Française*, after the first world war he becomes a bitter critic of the treaty of Versailles and in a powerful postscript to the fourth edition (1919) of the *Réflexions* hails Lenin as the liberator of the proletariat. Lenin was hardly influenced by the doctrines of Sorel, but Mussolini, though doubtless with less justification than Lenin, has always claimed to be a pupil of Sorel.

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Is it possible in view of these different phases of Sorel's political and social philosophy to establish its permanent structures?

All political, social, moral, and religious revolutions of the past have been made by minorities. The masses have always been passive. The militant Christians forced the edict of Milan in 313 and the Jacobins were also a resolved minority. 'The majority of a country can not generally perform great changes which are based on absolute theories. A society develops itself historically and the masses remain in their traditions.' Thus wrote Sorel in 1889 in his book, *Le Procès de Socrate*. The will to power, not numbers, creates a new social substance. *Élites* of soldiers, officers, and generals have alone won battles, the captains of industry have built up capitalism, Catholicism, too, has been formed by a religious *élite*. According to Sorel the *élites* of the future will be the proletarian *élites*. The workers must be as certain of their victory as the martyrs of the first Christian centuries. This certainty alone gives them perseverance in their battles and makes them to overcome all obstacles which they may meet on their strenuous way. The discipline of *élites* cannot grow within a political party. The *centre* of the formation of a proletarian *élite* must be seen in the syndicalist movement. Here is the school of revolution for the working classes. In strikes the leaders of the *syndicats* try out their social responsibility until the masses in the factories are ripe for the 'myth' of the *general strike*.

Sorel's doctrine of the myth has been largely misunderstood though one would have thought that he has made this important concept of his social philosophy unmistakably clear. Thus he writes in the *Réflexions sur la violence*: 'I do not attach importance to the objections given to the General Strike on the ground of practical considerations. There is no way to be able to forecast the future in a scientific manner or even to discuss the superiority which certain hypotheses can have on others.' Here the myth finds its adequate place and function. 'Experience proves to us that the constructions of a future, undetermined by time, can be of great value and need not have any disadvantages while they are of a certain nature; that is to say, while they concern myths in which they find the strongest tendencies of one people, party or class, forces which present themselves to the spirit with the insistence of instincts in all circumstances of life, and which give an aspect of plain reality to the hopes of the next action on which the reform of the will is founded. We

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know that these social myths prevent no man from knowing how to make profit from all the observations he makes in the course of his life and are no obstacle to the fulfilment of his normal occupation.' It is certain that Sorel expounds in these sentences one of the most fruitful though hitherto hardly fully applied concepts of modern political sociology.

The general strike announces the birth of a new society which is to follow the period of capitalism. A militant energy, discipline, love of work, purity of morals—these are the virtues of a proletarian *élite* to be qualified for building a new order of society.

Sorel's theory of *élites* has its roots in his appreciation of the moral forces which are substance and strength of the human being. Here, as has already been suggested, he is much more influenced by Proudhon than by Karl Marx though the latter's early writings show a clear ethical tendency very much in contrast to the positivist-deterministic touch of his later works. It is true that Sorel's theory of history is deeply indebted to Marx which can be clearly seen when he writes in his preface to R. A. Seligman's *L'interprétation économique de l'histoire*: 'Never discourse on the Right, political institutions, ideologies of art, of religion, of philosophy, without representing in its entire reality the economic life of the people under consideration, with its historical class divisions, with its development of technical processes, and with its natural conditions of productivity. The *rapprochement* thus established between the inner structure of a society and its superstructure throws a vivid light on those things which the society contains, and leads often towards a way of grasping its history.' Yet Sorel always was very conscious of the difficulty, if not of the impossibility, of giving a *general* and *direct* series of causes interrelating the economic sphere of societies with the non-economic realm.

Consequently, Sorel maintained that contingency and human will-power play a decisive rôle in the historic process. In this respect Sorel largely draws on Giambattista Vico's social philosophy. It is particularly Vico's doctrine of the *ricorsi*, the 'repetitions' which finds its place here. But he transforms the doctrine of the *ricorsi* in an original sense. They entirely lose their metaphysical character, so distinct in Vico's system. While Vico gave the *ricorsi* a providential meaning—an epoch of barbarity being succeeded by an epoch of a civilized character in order to fall back again in an

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epoch of barbarity from which, again, history proceeds to a civilized phase—Sorel teaches that the *ricorsi* are by no means only an historic division into *epochs*. The ‘repetitions’ or perhaps better and more exact ‘returns’ can happen more frequently in the course of the historic process than Vico assumed and, furthermore, development and primitivity may occur simultaneously. Thus, for example, Rousseau during an age of progress of civilization regarded the state of primitivity as ideal, hereby contrasting progress and primitivity as irreconcilable in *one* epoch: *ricorso* and revolution come thus very near to each other: when Revolutions set free moral energies, then, they are true *ricorsi*. Barbaric beginnings are being followed by a civilized period. We now understand Sorel’s admiration for Lenin in 1917. Or, to give another historical example: The Great French Revolution broke up with instinctive, primitive violence the *ancien régime*. In Napoleon I’s order certain elements of the *ancien régime* returned. The *ricorso* is an eminently fluid, but at the same time dangerous historic category. It can reveal and justify violence and conservatism at the same time. It was his friend Benedetto Croce who had made Sorel familiar with Vico.

History shows that the heritage of the great teachers of humanity can only be preserved by a truly heroic effort of the human will. Decadence is nothing else than the manifestation of our vulgar, barbaric, and absurd instincts which have been covered for a moment by an artificial order which genius has imposed on us. Sorel was a most bitter critic of his own time, a true contemporary of Jacob Burckhardt and Nietzsche.<sup>1</sup> Sorel despises democracy because democracy attempts to share out a cheap happiness to all men, without acknowledging qualitative differentiations or asking for moral energy. During democratic elections Sorel sees only one master: money. Marriage is only an alliance of interests. Look at the divorce statistics of the capitalist countries. He is against neo-Malthusianism. We are living in an age of inescapable mediocrity. Here Sorel is deeply influenced by the Caesarism of Louis Napoléon and its consequence on French history. Renan’s *Réforme intellectuelle et morale* was one of the books with which Sorel was thoroughly familiar. Perhaps he was the last great critic of the 2nd of Decem-

<sup>1</sup> On Burckhardt see my essay, ‘Jacob Burckhardt or the Flight from Politics’, *Dublin Review*, 1941; on Nietzsche my book, *Nietzsche: Kritik und Zukunft der Kultur*, Zürich, 1935.

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ber 1851. De Tocqueville, Montalembert, Renan, Péguy, and Sorel belong to one spiritual family.

And yet Sorel's pessimism—in this context he refers expressively to Calvinism and early Christianity—is at the same time a call for liberation. Like the Christian martyrs who believed in the irresistible victory of Christianity and readily accepted death for this goal, so the proletarian *élite* must go forward to victory in spite of the despicable realities of the present.

Sorel's political philosophy is a doctrine of action. His activism reveals itself in his theory of knowledge, where he is much indebted to Henri Bergson. It is all too easy, Sorel maintains, to put forward systems of certain notions; which are only being invented to please a lazy *bourgeoisie*. Only action is the criterion of truth. There is no monism of thought. The ancient philosophy of unity has finally abdicated: 'enough of metaphysics. . . . Let us descend to the level of daily life.' The proletarian *élites* alone can build a new world: they will replace the old static metaphysics by the Right and the ethics of the world of the worker.

The suggestive importance of Sorel's social and political philosophy is considerable. He has liquidated the rigid orthodoxy of the Marxist system and related the ideas of Marx to the philosophy of Nietzsche and Bergson. He has underlined the moral forces in history and fully appreciated the significance of political and juristic institutions in social history. Yet, his doctrine of the 'myth' of the general strike is to-day hardly defensible. Though Sorel vehemently rejected political socialism whether represented by Guesde or Jaurès, it seems that he orientated his political philosophy in a too one-sided sense towards the 'proletariat'. He, clearly, underrated the social differentiations amongst the industrial workers themselves; he has also hardly analysed the rising new social strata between the *bourgeoisie* and the workers which have entirely altered the structure and the balance of modern society.

Perhaps his theory of *élites* is the most important element of his doctrine, despite of its gross distortion by Mussolini's Fascism, though it is true that Sorel's anti-intellectualism and his doctrine of action brings him near to Fascism. Contrariwise his belief in the mission of the proletariat makes Sorel one of the spiritual fathers of Bolshevism. And yet his theory of the necessity of a moral *élite* is an essential element of a future political philosophy.

# V

## Perspective

Perhaps some obvious tentative conclusions implicit in and arising from the preceding pages may now be drawn. The history of French political thought during the last hundred and fifty years has represented itself to us as a continuing and by no means finally concluded discussion of the three great principles of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.

Neither during the first phase of the Great Revolution, nor during the period of the *Charte*, nor during the Second Republic, nor since 1870 has the substance of the idea of Equality as related to Liberty and Fraternity been fulfilled. Economic equality can under no circumstances exist while the large-scale industrialists or bankers by virtue of their economic power silently control the brakes of the machinery of the French State. Nor can the peasants claim to represent the entire nation, nor can the workers maintain that the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' is a self-evident blessing for these social groups which to a large extent made up the following of the radical-socialist party.

The French nation must be institutionally conceived as a unity of all classes, including last but not least the new class of technicians, the 'middle-income skill groups' as Harold Laswell has termed them, which in any modern society so easily become a prey to totalitarianism. Amongst them the *fonctionnaires* of State and Communes are perhaps those who deserve the greatest attention, not only in France.

The great drama of the French Revolution, understood as *one* historic process which still is not yet completed, demolishes the fundamental incompatibility between an individualistic economic system and the conception of a social democracy. The principles of 1789 were formulated as ideals of the *Tiers État*, but once the rising working class claimed the application of these principles as

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fulfilment of its own human rights, the French *bourgeoisie*, including the remnants of the *ancien régime*, supported by the peasantry, and the Catholic Church united to defeat the 'red danger'. Babeuf's 'conspiracy of the equals', the rising of the Parisian proletariat in June 1848, the Commune, and the defeat of the Popular Front government in 1938 are enough evidence for the failure of the French nation to fulfil the postulate of economic equality. Indeed: the idea of equality before the law which the Revolution established did not imply a solution of the problem of economic equality, though the revolutionary patriotism seemed at times to provide an integration of the 'two nations' which persisted within France.

Albert Sorel in his great work, *L'Europe et La Révolution française*, has admirably shown how this revolutionary patriotism confounded itself with the principles of 1789: 'Under the *ancien régime* the King was regarded as a State itself: he was the living symbol of France to Frenchmen, and love of country was equivalent to devotion to the King. Thus when sovereignty was placed in the people, the nation took the place of the King, and love of country was equivalent to respect for the law. Meanwhile, as law should rest on justice, and justice on reason, and the revolution should establish the reign of law, not for a single people, but for the whole of humanity, the notion of the fatherland was generalized as that of the law. There was one fatherland for humanity; it was established wherever reason was sovereign: patriotism was thus equivalent to attachment to the *Rights of Man*. The patriot was a citizen of the world.' (Vol. I, pp. 538 sq.) Hence the semi-religious fervour of the revolutionary wars. Even after the first phase of the Revolution the French nation found again and again its strength in its '*union sacrée*'; nor has French patriotism in periods of military and moral defeat as after 1870 or after 1940, ever lost its burning passion.

And yet the history of French political thought within the last 150 years shows that the idea of *la patrie* which has been said to stand for fraternity is not ground strong enough to build on. What Julien Poujade in his noble and penetrating study, *Esquisse d'une histoire des Français* (Paris, 1932), foresaw has been justified by events. When a nation loses its will to be *one*, it will disappear as a nation. 'Probably the form in which one always has seen it in history: the exclusive attachment of members of the whole to their class interests and their refusal to subordinate these interests to the

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demands of the whole.' Do not think, Frenchmen, the great critic warns his countrymen, that such an attitude cannot be adopted by the possessing classes. Have we not witnessed, we might add, how French capital fled from France in 1848 as in 1936? 'What seems certain', M. Benda concludes, 'is that, workers or *bourgeois*, those Frenchmen who recognize nothing except their own class interests soon made an appeal to men of the same class as they live beyond the frontiers, thus arousing an intervention from abroad which . . . marked the ruin of all the nations which provoked it.'

It is perhaps essential to disentangle the secular character of the principle of the nation from the conception of fraternity—apparently confounded with French revolutionary patriotism. The idea of Fraternity is fundamentally a Christian idea, transmitted to the Western mind ever since the Middle Ages integrated Stoic universalism, the spirit of the *Evangile*, and Roman Law. We have met in the course of our commentary thinkers as diverse as Royer-Collard, Renan, and Taine or Jaurès who have agreed that the religious foundations on which French life is based are facts of which no separation of Church and State, nor any educational system, however secular, should lose sight. On the other hand, political thinkers like Lamennais, Montalembert, and more recently Péguy, Jacques Maritain and his friends have proved that there is a tradition in French Catholicism which is wholeheartedly and sincerely ready to accept the principles of the French Revolution provided that the State is prepared to acknowledge that Catholicism is not necessarily *the enemy*.

The nation is not an ultimate value. It is the essence of the Western conception of the nation, that it is dominated by a higher norm: justice. Did not de Tocqueville, Jaurès, and Péguy teach us that the idea of justice is above the nation; even that we are allowed to take a stand against the nation when the law of justice is violated?

France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries performed the task of translating the eternal heritage of the Western mind into the vocabulary of a European political conscience.

But it seems that the revolutionary virulence has expanded its strength. It is not only the limitation of space which has led us to neglect to analyse the political philosophy of French foreign or

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Empire policy. Perhaps here as in great parts of her internal economic structure France lived on her capital acquired in the seventeenth century when French civilization in fact represented *la civilisation universelle*. Or is it a too daring generalization if we say that the principles of 1789 which once conquered Europe, lose their strength, become shadows of a greater past, as it were, provincial slogans? France will have to decide whether she wants to be a nation of peasants and small-scale industrialists or whether she will, without a Maginot-line psychology, take her share as a great moral and political power in the new structure of world society which is being built now. France does not lack those builders of a new society as Raoul Dautry and his friends have proved. In Dautry's book, *Métier d'homme* (Paris, 1937), a new political philosophy announced itself in France. This task can only be fulfilled when France—true to her living traditions—is able to define anew the relationship between State and individual. French material, moral, social, and cultural resources are certainly not less rich than those of any other of the great powers which are bound under the Atlantic Charter not only to defeat fascist totalitarianism, but also to build a new world.

This new world is the world of the twentieth century with twentieth-century problems. Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity must be translated from their abstract meaning into concrete synchronized institutions related to a contemporary metropolitan France and her Empire. (The term Empire is here being used in the sense of Commonwealth, meaning that the British Commonwealth is until now more an idea than a reality.) It is noteworthy that a sociologist of the rank of M. André Siegfried wrote in his *Tableau des Partis en France*: 'Before these present-day problems our almost anarchical principle of individualism is largely ineffective.' (p. 232.) This individualistic conception of the relationship between State and individual is indeed anachronistic and will have to be overcome—and overcome it will be. 'In England, in the United States', writes M. André Siegfried again, 'the idea was that the State should fundamentally be morally conceived, more political and not at all intellectual, recognizing the rights of man, but also drawing him into social duties which, from our point of view are liable to threaten his freedom seriously.' (Ibid., pp. 230 sq.) This moral conception

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of the State France has still to realize, and if we are not mistaken, under the surface of her tragic defeat the process of a new conception of the French State in which the rights *and* the duties of the individual are being reconciled, is well under way.

It is significant that Dautry wrote as early as 1934: 'Thus the watchword (in the nineteenth century) was freedom in the economic as well as in the political field, since economic freedom seemed to be the condition of an apparently unlimited expansion.' This absolute liberalism is dead once and for all. 'It was thus that the idea of production without regulation, which is the basis of economic liberalism, made way in nearly the whole of Europe for the idea of regulated production and controlled competition, for according to the words of Lacordaire "there are times when liberty oppresses, and the law upholds justice".' Such a new order of production France must establish. Not only is this an economic necessity, but also a political postulate. Dautry, without hesitation though with certain apprehension, applies his economic vision to the realm of politics. 'As for me, I am certain that the two problems before us will be resolved, that of conciliating personal freedom which the French people stick to with all their might, with an authority for which there is an urgent need, and that of conciliating private property and collectivism. *I believe in the deep desire for peace which is in the very instincts of the nation, together with an equally deep desire for change which will resolve the antagonism of freedom and authority, without a romanesque and destructive revolution.*' (Our italics.) Indeed, the conciliation of Liberty with Authority is the task which the Great Revolution, whose painful and fascinating process has to some extent passed before our eyes, has hitherto failed to achieve.

We have quoted above Julien Benda's dictum: 'France is the victory of the abstract over the concrete.' Perhaps, a future France should become the victory of the concrete over the abstract.

Finally, we have perhaps learnt from bitter experience that economics cannot be separated from politics. Obviously it is not the task of the historian of political thought to anticipate a constitution for the France of to-morrow. Yet certain lessons may have suggested themselves.

One of them is perhaps paramount: Liberty is not licence, nor is it anarchy. Liberty is above all voluntary discipline. Those French-

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men who have experienced its atmosphere in Great Britain—and liberty is according to Royer-Collard and de Tocqueville above all an atmosphere—may convey its meaning to their countrymen. Once this lesson is learnt, the political philosophy of a new France will arise.

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